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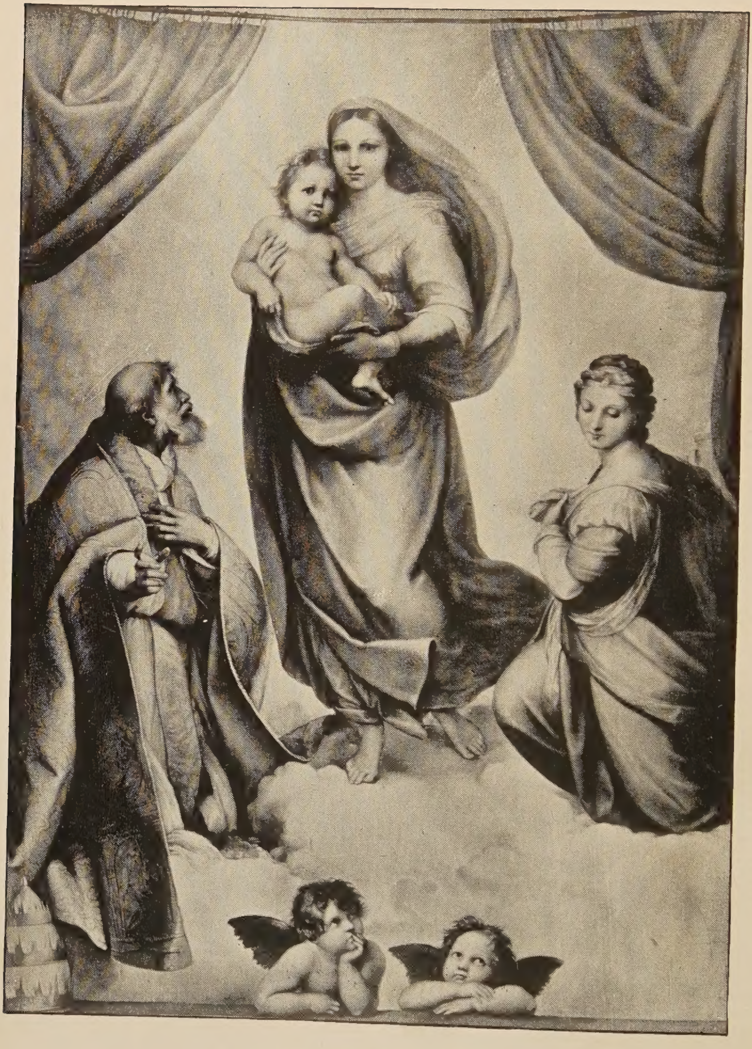

THE MADONNA OF ST. SIXTUS.

From the Painting by Raphael.

JESUS CHRIST

7

OUR SAVIOUR'S PERSON, MISSION, AND SPIRIT

FROM THE FRENCH OF THE
REVEREND FATHER DIDON, O. P.

EDITED BY
RIGHT REVEREND BERNARD O'REILLY, D. D.; D. LIT. (LAVAL)
DOMESTIC PRELATE OF HIS HOLINESS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HIS EMINENCE JAMES, CARDINAL GIBBONS
ARCHBISHOP OF BALTIMORE

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. I

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NEW YORK
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1891

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PREFACE.

THE new Life of Christ, by the distinguished Dominican, Père Didon, has already—in the original French—reached within a few months its twentieth edition.

So unprecedented a success is the best justification for presenting it in these volumes to the English-reading public, and we are satisfied that it will be welcomed in this country by Christians of all denominations as a valuable addition to the religious literature of the day.

It is a remarkable fact that the last fifty years have witnessed more attempts to portray the person and life of the Redeemer of mankind than all the other Christian ages put together. This is doubtless due in a great measure to the historical spirit which forms one of the most prominent mental characteristics of the century. But its principal cause is to be looked for elsewhere, and we shall find it in the variety of beliefs which claim to represent true Christianity amongst us, each one being naturally led to give a presentation of the life and doctrine of the Founder in harmony with its own teachings. Even those who have ceased to believe in the supernatural character of Christianity are confronted with the person and work of Christ as the greatest factors of history, and some attempt must be made to account for them. Hence the numbers of "Lives of Christ" which come to us from abroad or take rise amongst us, corresponding to every shade of belief or unbelief, and, as a consequence, with differences sometimes so radical, that if the question made of old by the Master himself were to be repeated to us, "Whom do men say that the Son of Man is?" our reply would have to show Him proclaimed by turns the central figure of history and a half-legendary myth, the noblest ideal of humanity and an unpractical enthusiast, a dreamer and the eternal Son of the eternal God.

In the present work He is shown to us principally as the Son of Man—that is, in His human aspect, and as He appeared to His contemporaries.

In the ages of Faith men sought not to see Him thus. While fully realizing the historical truth of the Gospel narrative, their deep reverence in a way forbade them to dispel the haze which time had gathered around the more accidental circumstances of the life of Our Lord. Not so with us. At the same time that we dwell lovingly on the examples of Christ, and seek for guidance and strength in His divine teachings, we want to see Him live and move in His own time, amid His real surroundings; and, with the new historical methods and a more familiar knowledge of what is far distant and long past, we strive to reconstruct the living features of the home, the country, the people, and all the other environments amid which the Saviour chose to accomplish His blessed work.

This our present historian has not failed to do. Combining the abundant materials collected by so many others with his own personal observations among the unchanging physical and social features of Eastern countries and Eastern customs, he succeeds in bringing up before us a vivid picture of Judæa and Galilee: of the Jewish people with their various religious divisions and their common aspirations and hopes; the galling yoke of the Romans which they so impatiently bore, and their readiness to grasp at any means of deliverance—in a word, their whole political, religious, and moral condition when Christ appeared amongst them.

A familiar knowledge of such details is invaluable, for only by means of it can many particulars of the Gospel be properly understood. But, what is still more important, it enables us fully to account for many things which seem inexplicably missing in the sacred narrative.

We refer in particular to the indistinctness of certain doctrines which have become, nevertheless, the light and life of the Church in subsequent ages. Thus, for instance, how often has it been, to the thoughtful reader of the Gospel, a subject of wonder and perplexity that so fundamental a doctrine as that of the divinity of Our Lord should not have been set forth by Him more prominently and more distinctly! But, when we come to know the circumstances in which He spoke, we realize at once the wisdom, not to say the necessity, of His revealing but gradually, and often indirectly, the deep and solemn secret of His divine nature.

In reality, Christ, though universally expected at the time of His coming, appeared among men entirely different from what was anticipated. The Messiah of the Jewish imagination was to be a powerful conqueror; he was to lift up the chosen people from their abasement, to give them sway over their enemies, and be himself their Lord and king. But that he should be a divine person—God himself in human form, living in their midst—seems to have been entirely foreign to their thoughts. True, a careful study of the prophecies might have taught them to look for more than a man in the coming Redeemer, and in the apocryphal writings of the period we have proof of obscure yet real anticipations of a similar kind among the more enlightened. But to the bulk of the people, including some of the most religious, the thought of substantially identifying one who appeared amongst them as a man with their great Jehovah would have seemed a horrible blasphemy.

Consequently, unless Christ chose in His limitless power to transform all at once the minds of a whole people and make them welcome what was hitherto entirely out of harmony with their thoughts—as to suddenly show forth His hidden greatness, so as to crush all resistance—methods entirely opposed to the economy and spirit of His work—it only remained for Him to lead on, slowly and gently, the minds of His followers, and through them, subsequently, mankind at large, to a full comprehension of His mysterious nature.

And this is just what we find Him doing in the Gospel narrative. Like His Messiahship, like the kingdom purely spiritual which He proposes to establish, His divine nature is commonly no more than hinted at, or left to be gathered from His attitude and actions, or, if suddenly it shines forth, it is only for an instant. In some cases it would almost seem as if the Saviour involuntarily betrayed His secret rather than deliberately revealed it. Hence, when formally questioned on the subject, He answers ambiguously, or leads off the thoughts of His hearers in another direction. Yet all the time His real character was impressing itself, unconsciously it may be, on the minds of His disciples. Even from the outset, His miracles had raised Him up in their estimation to the dignity of a Prophet or Divine Messenger. The startling character of the wonders He wrought, their vast range, extending over all Nature and reaching down into the regions of death itself—the very naturalness with which they seemed to be accomplished—all was calculated to suggest to those who habitually witnessed them the hidden presence of the Creator himself.

So also the tone of supreme authority which the great Teacher assumed in His discourses. He reasons not, nor does He exhort. He affirms and He commands. To the writer, if he may speak of himself, the Sermon on the Mount alone is an unmistakable revelation of His divinity, not because of the surpassing beauty of its doctrines, but because of the attitude and manner of the Teacher. God himself could scarce have taken a higher tone. He alone could, without impiety, thus gather all around Himself, making even religion to be loyalty to His person, and claim to hold in His hand the everlasting fate of man.

And this is nothing exceptional. Again and again, in His other recorded utterances, we find the same assumption of divine rights — a pretension to occupy in the hearts of men a place which belongs to God alone—such a sense of His incomparable greatness, that He, the humble and gentle Jesus, hesitates not to proclaim unworthy of Him and of the Gospel whoever is not ready to relinquish, for His sake, family, friends, country, and life itself.

Whilst gathering in, day after day, the impression of such discourses, the disciples could hear their Master claim the divine prerogative of forgiving sins declare Himself Lord of what was most sacred to the Jew--the divine institution of the Sabbath. They could see Him set aside the established authorities, and cleanse, as by a natural right, the temple, which He calls "the house of His Father." They could listen to Him as, in that same temple and in the presence of learned doctors and priests, He claimed the closest and most extraordinary share in the operations and rights of God Himself—identity of action; a power to give life; the right to be honored as the Father is honored; the right to pronounce final and irreversible judgment on all men. They knew He was wont to speak with all the freedom of a loving child of God as "His Father," and that on one occasion at least He had gone so far as to affirm that "HE AND THE FATHER WERE ONE."

In what measure they realized the full sense of such utterances it is not easy to determine. The enemies of Jesus were prompt enough to perceive their bearing, and we find them more than once rising up in indignant protest against what they call the blasphemous assumptions of the Teacher of Galilee. Indeed, it would seem that these were the grounds on which they mainly based the accusations which led to His condemnation and death. As for His followers, it was obvious to them that there was much more than they could fathom in the mysterious being who had led them away from their homes and held them, as it were, captives, wondering and delighted at all they heard and witnessed. Doubtless, too, they caught occasional rapid, transient glimpses of the great truth, as was the case with Peter, when, at Cæsarea, he made that profession of faith which won the praise of Our Lord Himself. More than this might not have fitted in with the divine work, such as it had been ordained; perhaps it would have been beyond what in the disciples' human nature could have borne. As a fact, when we come to consider their history as a whole, we are led to the conclusion that the full, steady light of the divinity of their Master shone upon them only after His resurrection.

But how brightly it then and ever after lighted up their thoughts and impressed itself on their utterances. "My Lord and my God," exclaimed Thomas at the feet of his risen Saviour; and that supreme act of faith is echoed with growing intensity through the Gospel of St. John, through the Epistles of St. Paul, through the whole thought and life of the early Church. Everywhere we find the great truth proclaimed with a directness and a power which are missing, because they could not find a place in the teachings of Christ himself.

We have dwelt at some length on one of the difficulties suggested by the sacred narrative. Many more might be met in a similar way. Our historian disposes of several by the very manner in which he relates the actions and sayings of the Divine Teacher. Yet his object is different. He writes neither as an apologist nor as an exegete, but rather as a Christian philosopher and moralist. Hence he abounds in reflections which, though occasionally losing something of their power in the rhetorical flow of the great French orator, yet reveal a striking originality and depth of thought.

This last feature, besides the other remarkable qualities of the book, can not fail to fix the attention and awaken the interest of a large circle of readers. There are few, if any, who will not be much benefited by a careful perusal of it. To the habitual readers of the Gospels—and we ardently wish that the number of such may steadily increase—it will prove most helpful, by the clear light it throws on the actions and teachings of the Redeemer, while it may lead back others unfamiliar with the sacred text itself to draw directly from that inexhaustible treasure of divine truth. Perhaps to more than one it may bring home for the first time the irresistible claims of our Saviour to their loyalty and love, and cause them to repeat, as they lay down the book, the confession of the Roman centurion on Calvary, "TRULY THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD."

J. Card. Gibbons

Baltimore, Md.,
Feast of St. John the Baptist,
June 24, 1891.

NOTE OF THE AMERICAN EDITOR.

THE English version of Reverend Father Didon's great work has been placed in my hands by the Messrs. Appleton, with a note of the London publisher, Mr. Kegan Paul, to the effect that "the whole has been carefully and minutely revised by Father Didon himself, with the assistance in France of an English scholar."

Thus my responsibility as editor has been limited to a no less scrupulously "careful and minute" comparison of the version of the Scriptures selected by the translators with the corresponding text in the Douay Bible. No doctrinal error, as far as I can judge, is discernible in this edition. The same scrupulous care has been extended by me to the translation as a whole. Some needful corrections have been made in the plates. The approbation of the General of his Order, and the commendatory letter written to Father Didon in the name of Leo XIII, attest the value of this book.

Like the most eminent prelate whose name graces the title-page, I consented, at the solicitation of the large-minded publishers, to do my share toward giving to the American public a LIFE OF OUR SAVIOUR worthy of being welcomed into every Christian home, and calculated to benefit readers of every creed and class.

BERNARD O'REILLY.

NEW YORK, *July 9, 1891.*

APPROBATION OF THE CENSORS AND MASTER-GENERAL OF THE DOMINICAN ORDER.

"By order of the Very Reverend Father Joseph-Maria Larroca, Master-General of the Friars-Preachers, we, the undersigned, have read with care the book entitled JÉSUS-CHRIST, by Father Didon, of the Order of Preachers, Lecturer of Sacred Theology.

"Not only is the whole doctrinal portion of this book in conformity with the teachings of Theology, but the historical portion as well is nobly understood and set forth.

"The author shows us Christ-Jesus in the surroundings amid which He lived, rising above them by the divinity of the purpose which He cherishes and of the means which He employs. If the author sometimes uses the language of his adversaries, he presently gives us to understand that he especially aims to contend with them on their own ground; and he does so successfully where, in particular, he calls to his aid the positive arguments of history in order to refute their impious *a priori* theories.

"The literary form itself, at once simple and elevated, is in harmony with the majesty of the subject.

"For the above reasons, we judge this work to be worthy of being given to the public."

ROME, *March 20, 1890.*

Fr. ALBERTO LEPIDI, *Professor of Sacred Theology, and Prefect of Studies in the Roman College of St. Thomas Aquinas.*

Fr. JOACHIM BERTHIER, O. P., *Lecturer in Theology.*

Imprimatur:
Fr. JOSEPH-MARIA LARROCA.

(*Seal of the Master-General of the Order of Preachers.*)

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INTRODUCTION.

CRITICISM AND HISTORY IN A LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus Christ is the great name in history. There are others for whom men have died; he alone is adored by all people, in all nations, and in all times.

He who bears this name is known throughout the world. Even among the savage and degenerate tribes of the human race, his apostles preach without ceasing that he died upon the cross; and the offscourings of mankind may be saved by loving him. Those who are neutral, in the modern world, recognise that none is better for the weak and miserable.

The greatest intellects of the past would be forgotten if memorials, as palaces, obelisks or tombs; if written testimonies, as papyrus or parchments, bricks, columns or medals, had not preserved their memory. Jesus survives in the conscience of the faithful: there is his witness and indestructible monument. The Church founded by him fills time and space with his name. She knows him, she loves him, she adores him. As he lives in her she lives in him. He is her dogma, her moral law, her worship. She teaches to all without exception, that he is the only Son of God made man, conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin; that he has come into the world to suffer and to die for our salvation, to conquer death by his resurrection; that he has ascended to his Father in order to prepare us a place near him; that he will return to judge the quick and the dead, giving to the good life eternal, casting the bad into darkness and spiritual death.

This Creed is at once dogma and history: it is the dogma and the popular history of Jesus. By it the believer can live. In a few deep and simple words, he learns that the greatest event in human history is the birth of Christ; that God loves him, since God willed to save him from evil and to give himself to him; that charity is the supreme duty, because it was through love that his Master died; that he must be unwearied in well-doing, since his Master will be his judge; that he need not fear death, since his Master has overcome it, and because he himself is predestined to eternal life.

The man who believes in this teaching and in this Christ can go forward through life: he is armed for defence; he may grow great, and nothing can stay him. The disciple of Jesus has become the sovereign of the world, but in no material nor brutal way; for the spirit of his crucified Master is only violent in regard to justice, goodness, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and moral worth. By sowing these virtues as the seeds of life, he prepares and enriches the human soil, which thereby becomes capable of the highest cultivation and of the richest harvest.

But as the reason of those who think seeks to understand elementary dogmas, asks an explanation of them so far as our imperfect and limited cognisance allows, demands that the attacks of hostile philosophy, science, and literature, be foiled; so it desires to know in detail the human and divine life of Jesus, the words which he spoke, the law which he has formulated, his manner of teaching, preaching, striving, suffering, and dying.

The history of Jesus is the foundation of the faith. The doctrines and theology of the Gospel, Christian ethics, the worship, the hierarchy, and the order of the Church, all rest upon it. Thanks to the unwearied labour of the learned, the doctrine of Jesus, his ethical system, his worship and his Church have gradually become the object of distinct, perfect, and organised sciences, answering to the legitimate aspirations of those believers who desire to be at once men of faith and men of science; and so the life of Jesus Christ must be told according to the demands of history. The present work is an attempt to meet these deep needs.

The partisans of what is now called the critical school say: The Christ of dogma and tradition, the Christ of the Apostles and of the Gospels, interpreted according to the doctrine of the Church, is not and cannot be the Christ of history. This ideal Christ, God and man, the Incarnate Word, miraculously conceived, calling himself the Only Son of God, in a metaphysical and absolute sense, abounding in miracles, speaking as the fourth Gospel makes him speak, rising again on the third day, ascending to heaven in the sight of his disciples after forty days, is not a real man. He only exists in the pious imagination of believers, and by that alone has he been created.

The true Jesus, the Jesus of history, was born like all other men, lived like them, did no more miracles than they; he has taught a purer morality, founded a religion less imperfect than others; and as all reformers, as a rule, yield to the unyielding nature of their surroundings, he was the victim of Jewish hostility; he died like us; he did not rise again; he does not live with God.

Not only my Christian faith, but my impartiality as a man, revolts at this contradiction between dogma and history, laid down as a principle, and declared to be an axiom opposed to any life of Jesus as both God and man. Convinced that Jesus was the invisible God in a human form like ours, I as an historian, see him in his life, as now he is, in this double nature.

The question of his divinity has divided the noblest minds ever since his advent; it will divide them to the end; it is indeed strange that Jesus alone has raised a problem which never sleeps in the conscience of men, a problem which never fails to stir them. I will here draw the attention of unprejudiced men, and of all fair-minded critics, to this simple historical reflection.

The violent controversy of which Jesus is the object was foretold in the prophecies. It will last as long as the world lasts; it grieves, but does not surprise or trouble the Christian, for he sees in it a witness to his Master. It was found even in the life of Christ. When his disciples, in answer to his question, said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the Jews only said, "He is a prophet"; others, blinder still, declared that he was a blasphemer and a revolutionary.

When he had left the earth, while the apostles preached him in the Jewish synagogues as the Messiah both God and man, full of the wisdom and the power of God, the earliest sectaries, Nazarenes and Ebionites, declared him to be merely man.

The struggle on this point was prolonged through centuries; a heathen philosopher, Celsus, without however denying the miracles of Jesus, scoffed at his doctrine which he called absurd, and at his cross, which he considered infamous. Origen, in refutation, proclaimed the divinity of his Master.

Since then the times have changed. The Crucified has become great, has destroyed heathenism, has absorbed philosophy, and dethroned the Empire, has conquered the earth, civilized the barbarians, and created a new world. Who then were right, the Jews who reviled Jesus and slew him; the heathen, like Tacitus, Suetonius, and that honourable prefect of Bithynia, Pliny the Younger, who disdained him and his disciples as a contemptible sect; philosophers like

Celsus, overwhelming him with their foolish wisdom, or the apostles, who adored in Jesus the Son of God?

If Jesus were in reality a mere man dishonoured by the Jews and by the heathen, how comes it that he has marked on the earth so deep a furrow, and founded a religion which dominates the world?

The work is inexplicable; it is the readiest proof that Jesus was indeed all that the Church affirms.

I.

The first element of a scientific history is that it should be set out by wise, clear-sighted, and impartial criticism.

Criticism, however, must not be confounded with history; though they are inseparable, they must remain distinct.

In its most general sense criticism is the exercise of judgment, a faculty essential to every reasonable being. To criticise and to judge are synonymous; for judgment, like criticism, has for its object discrimination between the true and the false. It is the first of the rights, and the most necessary of the duties, of reason. Whatever be the domain explored by it: whether religion, philosophy, science, literature, aesthetics, or even mathematics, the reason must be alert to discern the reality of phenomena, to recognize the truth, which is often deceptive, and the false, which is occasionally plausible.

Criticism, therefore, cannot be a special science; it is rather a condition of all science. It is a part, even, of that logic which fixes for men the rules of just thought and sound judgment. These simple considerations demonstrate the absurdity of those who consider they have a monopoly of criticism. The critical school is the school of all men; every one can, and ought, to belong to it. The most ordinary temptation of the cultured mind is to criticise beyond measure, to desire to judge everything, even that of which it is ignorant. The wise man restrains this eager and intemperate desire ; he learns to judge only what he knows, never forgetting that his knowledge is limited and his ignorance immeasurable.

A man may be an excellent critic in philosophy and a very bad judge in religion or in history. Certain branches of human knowledge require not only a speculative mind, but a long experience. Moral doctrines will be better judged by an ignorant person who has practised virtue than by a sceptic who knows nothing of the austere joys of self-sacrifice. The saints who live by the words of Jesus will always understand them better than the Hellenizing interpreter who rejects them and does not know their savour. A delicate taster can perceive niceties which escape the analyst.

When applied to history, criticism has a very definite function. History has for its object the relation of facts ; now, past facts being only known to us by documents, and documents being edited by the more or less immediate witnesses of the facts themselves, criticism must examine, all together, facts, documents, and witnesses.

Certain facts are absurd : criticism puts them on one side ; certain documents are tampered with, or of doubtful authenticity : criticism points them out or rejects them ; if the witnesses are unworthy of credence, it tears off the mask and gives them the lie.

In regard to the life of Jesus, preliminary criticism is required and privileged to examine the documents and the witnesses which give us information about this life ; the antiquity and authenticity of the first, the testimonial value of the others ; it must examine the nature of the facts recorded in the documents, or related by witnesses.

These problems have for more than a hundred years raised so much controversy in Germany, Switzerland, England and France, that many volumes would scarcely suffice to record it. The refutation of erroneous solutions would of itself demand a volume. Here we can only trace the main lines and sum up, while we give the reason for, a few definite conclusions.

II.

The works which teach us, in detail, the acts and words of Jesus, his birth, his life and his death, his doctrine, his institutions, and his work, are not numerous: a few letters written by the Apostles, a few chapters in the Acts, and chiefly the four books known as the Canonical Gospels. In spite of their trifling bulk, these writings are inexhaustibly rich in the abundance of the acts and words that they record. Their first merit, as documents, is their antiquity. Edited in the years which immediately followed the events, they are the simple and truthful expression of the memories which the teaching, the precepts, the example, and the person of their vanished Master had left in the soul of the disciples. Two years and a half of perpetual intercourse with him had transformed them little by little. One of the essential works of Jesus, that which took precedence of all others, without which the others would have had no result, was to engrave his living and faithful image on the mind of his apostles. They had to preach him to every creature, and in order to preach him it was necessary that they should know him; he only could teach them.

He concealed nothing from them; he treated them, according to his own expression, as friends. He laid himself bare to them; they recognised in him the only Son of the

Father, and the Son of Man, born of a woman, they heard his words of wisdom and holiness, saw the Heaven open above his head, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man ; they were the witnesses of his irresistible and divine power ; they understood the hidden reason of his sufferings, of his sorrows, of his voluntary weakness, of his unsuccess with the chosen nation and of his death ; they saw also the glory of the Risen One, a glory of which the splendour veiled from the world was reserved for the disciples alone ; they were inwardly and visibly possessed by his spirit. Clothed with this superhuman force they felt themselves commissioned by Christ, the invincible propagators of his faith, the continuers of his work ; and these Galilaeans, untaught, ignorant, and timid, laying aside all hesitation and all fear, fifty days after his death, in that very town where their Master had been crucified, set themselves to publish his name before the people who had demanded his execution, and the Sanhedrin who had arranged it. They called him "the Holy One and the Just, the Author of life" ; they sorrowfully reproached their hearers that they had killed him ; they affirmed that God had raised him from the dead ; they called him "the Messenger of the Lord, the Prophet foretold by Moses" ; they declared that the miracles which they worked were accomplished by the power of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the boldness of their faith, they pointed him out as the stone which the builders rejected, become, in the hands of God, the head of the corner, and as the only Saviour given to men.[1]

Their words, their courage, their conviction, and their zeal were irresistible. Neither prohibition, nor threat, nor scourge, nor chains, nor death stopped them. They called themselves the witnesses of the resurrection ; and, making an appeal to the conscience of their enemies, they added that the Holy Ghost, which God has given to all those who obey him, bore witness also of the truth of their words.[1]

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[1] Acts iii. 14; iv. 11.

This apostolic preaching is the earliest gospel. It sprang from the soul of the immediate disciples of Jesus, at the bidding of the Holy Ghost; it is the word of God; human conscience did not invent it, for it is the echo of the words of Jesus. None can deny its antiquity or its authenticity.

The historian, accustomed to call up past events, sees, by the aid of documents, the disciples of Jesus united in the memory and the worship of their Master. Their union was closer and more intimate, in proportion as they were more alone in more hostile surroundings. They were nothing by themselves and they had nothing; all their strength was in the power of God; all their science was summed up in one being: Jesus Christ. All their wisdom was in him, and he was all their treasure; all their destinies were limited by him; and as all these things existed only by faith, faith was their all, and was without measure; their life was no longer their own, but belonged to Christ.[2] They felt themselves his very members, and they were convinced that no power, whether on earth or in heaven, could separate them from his love. No such psychological phenomenon has ever been seen. Whatever influence great minds may exert over those who are near them, they cannot assimilate them to themselves in so full a degree, they only fashion them from outside, and are incapable of infusing into them their own spirit, as a new, living and personal force. In this community the whole life of Jesus was lived over again. As those filled with a great love, the disciples recalled and revived their common memories, told over again the acts of their Master, repeated his teaching and communicated it to their pupils. The smallest detail of the pathetic last days of his career, his arrest, his judgment, and his cross, all those scenes so full of sorrow and of anguish, appeared over again to them; never had they been more vividly conscious of Jesus. It is the property of separation and of death to concentrate the power of memory upon the absent. They are born again in us; and looking into the depths of our souls, we find them there, we see them and hear them. Jesus was truly in the midst of them; they lived with him in prayer,[1] and in the practice of virtues which he had taught them by his word and his example. There we must seek the first origin of the oral Gospel, which constitutes the first preaching of the apostles and the source of the written Gospels.

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[1] Acts v. 30.

[2] Gal. ii. 20.

The apostles soon felt the need of recording the instruction of their Master and the history of his life. The first believers must have desired ardently to keep in their memory the good news which the ambassadors of Jesus preached to them; and the ambassadors, leaving their new converts, the young communities organised by them, loved to leave them a witness more lasting than their words. The written Gospel arose to meet these needs.

III.

The exact duration of the time which elapsed between the earliest apostolic preaching and the appearance of the first written memoir cannot be ascertained; but that time must have been short. The universal tradition of the Church places the composition of the first Gospel between the years 33 and 40 of the Christian era.[2] The author of this Gospel was one of the apostles, Matthew the Publican. It was written in Hebrew characters for the Jews of Palestine and Jerusalem,[1] in the language which they then spoke, the Aramaic dialect, a mixture of Chaldaean and Syriac, which was the language of Jesus.

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[1] Acts i. 14.

[2] Euseb., *Chronic.* Bk. ii. Tiberius; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haeres.* iii. 1.

The leading idea on which all the faith of the apostles was concentrated, was that Jesus was before all things the Messiah of Israel announced by the prophets. They endeavoured to persuade all the Jews of this; their preaching was nothing else than the public witness to this truth, as is shown by the fragments of the discourses preserved in the Acts.[2] What Peter said, all his companions, animated by the same faith, said; and after Jesus had left them, they, obedient to his order, filled Jerusalem and all the synagogues of Palestine with the witness of their faith in his Messiahship.

This idea inspired the first Gospel; it is the soul of it, and reduces to unity all its parts. It is easy to see this when we examine the prophetic passages which the author quotes, and of which his own narrative is only the commentary and the historic justification.[3] This book has naturally and necessarily the genealogy of Jesus as its heading, to establish his descent from David; for, in the eyes of every Jew, the most popular of the Messianic titles was that of Son of David.

The great sermon on the mount befitted the legislator of the new time; the numerous parables concerning the Kingdom reveal him who came to preach the Gospel to the poor; the anathemas against the Pharisees and the prophecy about the future of Jerusalem and the world point to the judge who has his fan in his hand, and is the master of men and of the ages.

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[1] Jerome, *Adv. Pelag.* iii. 2; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haeres.* iii. 1; Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.* iii. 24; Jerome, *De Vir. illustr.* iii.; Fragm. Papias, ap. Euseb. iii. 39.

[2] Acts ii. 14; iv. 8; v. 29.

[3] Matt. i. 23; ii. 6, 15, 18, 23; iii. 3; iv. 15; viii. 17; xi. 5, 10; xii. 18; xiii. 35; xxi. 5, 16, 42; xxii. 44; xxvi. 31; xxvii. 9, 35, 43, 46.

This marked characteristic of the book, independently of its apostolic origin and its priority over the other Gospels, explains the authority it obtained, and the extraordinary power it exercised in the conversion of the Jews. The great debate between the believers and the Jews was, whether Jesus was or was not the Messiah of the prophets. The Gospel of St. Matthew answered the question with triumphant evidence.

All the Messianic titles pointed out by the prophets were verified in Jesus. The evangelist proved this by the life of the Master. His book is at once a living portrait of Jesus and a demonstration, or popular apology, of his Messiahship.

The original idiom in which it was composed was scarcely understood beyond Palestine; and yet the Messianic character of Jesus was of interest not only to the Jews of Jerusalem, of Judaea, of Idumaea and of Galilee, but to all those of the dispersion. As these last spoke Greek, it was necessary to translate for them the Syro-Chaldaic Gospel. A great number of people, according to the fragments of Papias,[1] applied themselves to the task. A Greek translation by an unknown author,[2] followed the original Aramaic very closely. It gained weight either from the authority of the translator, or from its acceptance by the Church; and it soon took the place of the primitive text, which disappeared after the destruction of Jerusalem, together with the group of Judaean Christians who used it. If a version of it remained in the hands of the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, it sustained alterations like all those others which the sects modified, interpolated, mutilated, and altered to suit their doctrines.

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[1] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.* iii. 39.

[2] Jerome, *De Vir. illustr.* iii.

Some years afterwards, when the apostles had finished their task in Judaea and had borne witness to their Master in the city, and had dispersed to carry the good news abroad, one of Peter's disciples, his interpreter, as Papias[1] calls him, or his secretary, according to the expression of St. Jerome,[2] accompanied the chief of the apostles in his missions. His name was Mark, and he seems to be the John Mark of the Acts.[3]

He was among the followers of Peter, towards the year 42, when Peter, persecuted by Herod Agrippa, had to flee from Jerusalem. He came to Rome itself to preach the Gospel, and his preaching obtained there an extraordinary success. The brethren wished to have a written memorial of the apostle's words, and, at their request, Mark wrote his Gospel. The apostle approved of the work which, invested with his authority, was read thenceforward by all the Church, as St. Clement declares.[4] The ancient world is unanimous about these facts.[5]

On a general comparison between the first and second Gospels, the most remarkable difference between them is in the brevity of St. Mark. The whole Jewish element of St. Matthew, all that part of the history of Jesus which was addressed to the Jews as a proof that he was the Messiah of Israel, has disappeared: his descent from David, the facts of his childhood, the sermon on the mount, in which the new law of the Messiah was opposed to the imperfections of the ancient law and traditions, as well as to the erroneous doctrines of the rabbis, the numerous parables about the Kingdom of God, are gone. It is plain that the writer is addressing those who were ignorant of Jewish customs.[1] He narrates the public life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. These considerable abbreviations have given the name of an abridgment to this Gospel, and St. Mark has been termed a condenser.[2]

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[1] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.* iii. 39.

[2] *Epist.* cxx., *qu.* 11.

[3] Acts xii. 25.

[4] Jerome, *De Vir. illustr.*, viii.

[5] Cf. Papias, ap. Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.* iii. 39; Clem Alex., ap Euseb. ii. 15, vi. 14; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haeres.*, iii. 1; Epiphanius, *Haeres.*, li., No. 6.

We must not however lay such stress on this expression as to disguise the real originality of the second Gospel. It was evidently compiled from the first; and except for the omissions, just mentioned, the resemblance in the choice and the order of facts is undoubted. St. Mark must have had the Aramaic Gospel of St. Matthew before his eyes, and he used it to compose his own in the Greek language; but his originality appears in his statement of the facts. An attentive examination shows that he had other sources of information, and that he had heard the words of his master, the apostle Peter. From this source above all he must have drawn the new details which he introduces, the more complete knowledge of names and places, indeed, all that is characteristic in his book.

The Gospel of St. Mark has not, like that of St. Matthew, any apologetic tendency. It was neither conceived nor arranged to demonstrate the Messiahship of Jesus. It is only the popular narrative of his public life in Galilee, of the tragic end of that life, and his triumphant resurrection at Jerusalem.

It is however the Gospel of the Son of God, and it proves implicitly the divinity of Jesus. It contains also, in its historic form, the apostolic message, such as Peter and all his colleagues delivered it when they preached to the heathen population of the Empire the name of the Saviour, the only one who, under heaven, has been given to man.[1] Facts play a larger part than discourses; the power of Jesus, whom all things obeyed, is more accentuated than his teaching. However, his suffering, his condemnation by the Jews, the shame of his passion and of his cross, are not concealed. The apostles did not blush for their Master; they knew that the blood shed on Calvary was the destined means to regenerate man and glorify God in Christ.

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[1] Cf. Mark vii. 1-4.

[2] Cf. Jerome, *De Vir. illustr.*, viii.; August. *De Cons. Evang.* i. 3; Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.* ii. 15.

We shall have a false and inadequate idea of the burning zeal of the Christians in the first years of the Church, if we forget the eagerness with which they sought to know the life of him to whom they had given their faith, and whom they adored as the Messiah, the Saviour, the Son of God.

Inflamed by the preaching of the apostles, they were inspired by every word and act of Jesus. Many among the disciples and their followers endeavoured to place on record what they had heard from the mouth of witnesses. The Aramaic Gospel of St. Matthew seems to have been specially the object of these efforts;[2] it was interpreted and translated, attempts were made to introduce into it new details, and to place the facts in an order more in accordance with the reality of history. The fruits of this literary activity have not come down to our time; all the books, to which one of the Gospels alludes,[3] have disappeared like so many imperfect works unworthy of attention, and which, doubtless, had no power of survival apart from the surroundings wherein they were born.

When a real and legitimate want is felt among a body of men, a more vigorous mind is almost always found to answer it.

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[1] Acts iv. 12.

[2] Cf. Fragm. Papias, ap. Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.* iii. 39.

[3] Luke i. 1.

The infant Church demanded a document which should give it a more complete picture of the history of Christ. A Gentile of Antioch, perhaps a Jew, converted by the Apostle Paul, one not without learning, and who seems to have taught medicine at Antioch itself, undertook to answer to this need among the early believers. Hence the new Gospel which was added to those of the apostle Matthew, and of Mark, the disciple of Peter. St. Paul praises this work in one of his epistles.[1] It was spread through all the Churches, and brought to light a great number of facts and discourses which had not been given in the earlier writings.

St. Luke fills up their gaps. A third of his narrative belongs to him alone, notably five miracles and twelve parables.[2] His main care was to gain information from witnesses who had seen everything from the beginning, and were established as ministers of the Word. A disciple of Paul, a companion of his travels,[3] a colleague of Barnabas, one of the seventy, he came to Jerusalem[4] and interrogated the apostles Peter, James the Less, who was called the brother of the Lord, and John, the Beloved Disciple. He certainly knew the family of Jesus and his mother, and the relatives of John the Baptist. He had seen the various writings to which he alludes in the preface to his work, and probably the Gospels of Matthew and of Mark. Indeed, it is unlikely that such documents, invested with the authority of the apostles, and, therefore, venerated by all the faithful, should not have been in his hands. He evidently supplemented them by his accounts of the birth of John and the infancy of Jesus, borrowed, no doubt, from a more ancient source, as is evident from their Hebrew style.

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[1] II. Cor. viii. 18.

[2] Luke i.; ii.; vii. 11-18, 36-50; x. 1, 25-42; xii.-xvi.; xviii. 1-14; xix. 1-28; xxiii. 6-12; xxiv. 12-53.

[3] II. Cor. viii. 18.

Acts xx.

He supplements them again by those many episodes with which the wandering life of Jesus was enriched, during a period of four or five months, from the day on which he quitted Galilee, having nowhere to lay his head, until his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The first two Gospels are silent on this important period. He gives them yet greater fulness by his narrative of the Resurrection, and by that of the Ascension, with which the Book of the Acts opens.

But the originality of St. Luke's work is in the chronological order which he attempts to establish between the facts, and above all in the spirit which regulates his choice of facts.

The chronological order, however imperfect, yet allows us to fix the date of the birth of Jesus, under Herod, and the beginning of his Galilaean ministry, in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, which were impossible had we St. Matthew alone. We can best characterise the spirit which animates him by calling it the very spirit of Paul.

At the time when Luke wrote, a new thing had happened in the infant Church. The Gospel, rejected by the Jews, found great favour among the Gentiles. The people flocked with enthusiasm to hear the preachers, and above all to him who called himself the Apostle of the Gentiles. Beside the mistrustful Jew, stiff-necked, and ready to persecute, was seen the docile and impressionable Gentile. The prophecy of Jesus was visibly accomplished ; the kingdom was taken from the chosen people and given to the people abandoned of God. The evangelist was a witness to this new fact, and, following in the steps of his master Paul, he laboured for the conversion of the Gentiles. In the bosom of the Church dissensions arose, the converted Jews did not always look with a kindly eye on their Gentile brethren; they prided themselves on their title of Children of Abraham, and could hardly rid themselves of a secret contempt for the uncircumcised. They would fain have brought them under the yoke of the law, but the Gentiles resisted. The Law was ended; the kingdom of Jesus had broken the ancient bonds. St. Paul defended the liberty of the children of God, free henceforward from all legal tutorship from that imperfect worship which he called the elements of the world.[1] The life of the Master was full of events by which this new state of things was foretold and justified; and it was necessary to produce them.

The living Spirit which watched over the apostles inspired St. Luke, as it had inspired St. Paul; and we find Christ in the third Gospel, the universal Saviour, as the heathen were to see him, as Paul preached him, and as he showed himself in his public life. St. Luke carefully gathered a large number of incidents, omitted by the first Gospel, which, while they humiliated the Jews, might give confidence to the Gentiles: the salvation promised to Zacchaeus the publican and to the penitent thief, the pardon given to the woman who was a sinner and to the prodigal son, the preference given to the publican over the Pharisee; he praises the Samaritan, that charitable outcast, in opposition to the Priest and the Levite, who had no bowels of mercy; he extols many Gentiles, he shows us Jesus praying for his executioners, converting the penitent thief and the Roman centurion.

St. Luke has thus described the most touching scenes of the life of Jesus, whom he delights, after the example of his master Paul, to call "the Lord." If Mark is the evangelist of power, Luke is the evangelist of mercy and goodness. The ancients, with their love for symbolism, gave to Mark the lion as his emblem, and to Luke, the victim, the ox whose blood is shed. In each page of his work we recognise One who saves and pardons, this Son of Man who came not to destroy but to save, not to judge but to forgive.

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[1] Gal. iv. 3.

The work must have been composed before the Acts, which are its continuation; and as these stop at the end of the second sojourn of St. Paul at Rome, we must place the production of the Gospel before the year 64.

The persecution of the Christians by Nero obliged Luke to flee from the capital of the Empire where Paul died; and the Gospel which he had written was carried by him into Achaia and Boeotia, where he sought refuge.[1]

Towards the middle of the first century, when the spirit which animated the Church had enlarged it and stirred up the apostles to the conquest of the Empire, beyond the provinces of Asia Minor and of Greece, the nascent faith encountered there not only the hostility of the Jews, but it came into collision with Pagan doctrine and the Jewish cabbala, that medley of opinions which constituted the wisdom of civilisation at that time. This obstacle was more dangerous than persecutions: these attacked the body only, while human philosophy was able to corrupt the faith and the words of Jesus. Among the converts from Paganism, many were imbued with this false wisdom. All ages and civilisations are alike; man can never escape from the influences of his surroundings, he accepts its doctrines as he accepts its ethics, without disputing them, and most frequently without understanding them.

The doctrines which then composed the intellectual atmosphere, whether religious or moral, took a little later the name of Gnosticism, a confused mixture of Monism, Pantheism, and Dualism, of Fate and Magic, and strange Asceticism; a mixture of speculations on the origin of things and on the universe.

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[1] Jerome, *De Vir. illustr.* c. vii.

Two currents prevailed: one starting from an ascetic Monism which appealed to the unitarian doctrine of the Jews; the other inspired by an obstinate Dualism.

Those who followed the first conceived of God as a transcendent and abstract unity, devoid of any relation to the world, and in himself unknowable.

The universe was produced by intermediary forces, impersonal, emanating from the silent and unknown principle. One of these forces, or Æons, as they were called, was the Logos or superior Christ, who was united, for a time, to Jesus. Redemption, according to them, was nothing but this: Jesus had preached the Truth or the unknown God, he had conquered the cosmic forces, the rulers of this world who paralysed the striving of the soul or the spiritual being towards the primitive Being. Man was not ransomed by faith in Jesus or by the merits of the divine Redeemer, but by the Gnosis, or the knowledge of God, of the spirits or Æons, of humanity and its relations. It was enough for man to be initiated into the Gnosis: and this initiation made of him a spiritual being.

According to the Dualists, who revived the doctrine of the Persians, the world is under the influence of two opposing forces, sprung from the depths of Being: light and darkness. The material world issued from darkness, and is in itself evil; but the light will triumph and finally will deliver the vaporous particles now captive in the body. Jesus, according to these heretics, was truly the Christ, the Son of God in person, but they denied that he was truly incarnate.[1] It is easy to imagine what dangers the word of the apostles would run in presence of minds who, rather than receive them as children, according to the commands of Jesus, thought only how to interpret them according to their own opinions. St. Paul, the founder of almost all the Churches of Asia Minor, had prophesied this danger and warned the heads of the communities[1] against these false prophets who attempted to corrupt the faith. Even in his lifetime he saw them at their work;[2] he pointed out their perversity and denounced their lying wisdom.[3]

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[1] Ignat., *Ad Smyrn.* ii. Cf. II. Tim. ii 8-17.

This peril is that of all ages of culture. The great difficulty for man is that he should submit himself simply to the Gospel; and his greatest temptation, to desire to transform it as he pleases according to his own systems.

The Gnostics denied the divinity of Christ, by reducing him to the part of an Æon or force inferior to God. They misunderstood the essential and true relation which binds Jesus to his Father, they were scandalised at his humanity which places him in contact with matter, the evil principle, as they accounted it; and they reduced it to a mere appearance. They refused to the Son of God and to him who claimed for himself that title, a true personality. The converted Jews, known as Judaisers, shared some of these errors, which, by destroying Christ, at the same time ruined his work. The Ebionites and the Docetae were in league together, the one sect denying the true humanity, the other the divinity, of Jesus, and menacing Christianity in its cradle. One of these heretics was Cerinthus; Irenaeus has preserved for us the main lines of his doctrine,[1] which was precisely that of the Ebionites; he saw in Jesus only a man, into whom, at the moment of baptism, a demiurge or Æon, called Christ, descended. Another of these false teachers was Nicolas the Deacon, whose loose morality was allied to the wildest speculations on the nature of God, on creation and the relation between God and the Universe.[2]

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[1] Acts xx. 28-31.

[2] I. Tim. i. 5-7.

[3] *Id.* i. 19; vi. 20, 21.

To combat these errors the apostle John, the beloved disciple, wrote a fourth Gospel.[3] All the heads of the churches of Asia, and the apostle Andrew as their leader, begged him to do so.[4]

There was none so able as he to bear witness to the truth. He did not oppose a human doctrine, or a philosophic system, to human doctrines and vain systems of philosophy. He was not a philosopher; he was a witness, who knew nothing but the word of his Master, and he only repeated what he heard. While St. Paul, in his Epistles, argues about and discusses the Gospel facts, the doctrine of Christ, the work of redemption, his death and his resurrection, St. John, gathering up his recollections, inspired by the Spirit by whom he was illuminated and who suggested to him, as Jesus promised to the faithful, all that he had to say, St. John bears witness; all that he narrates has one sole end, to establish the faith in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God and source of life eternal.

The object was no more to demonstrate by history as St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke had done, that Jesus is the true Messiah promised to the Jews, and the Saviour of every man by repentance and faith; but to ascertain the true divine nature of "him who came in the flesh."

[1] Irenaeus, *Adv. Haeres.*, I. xxvi. 1.

[2] August., *De Haeres. in princ.* v.

[3] Iren. *Adv. Haeres.*, III. i. 1; Clem. Alex., ap. Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.* vi. 14; Tertull., *Contra Marcion.* iv. 2.

[4] *Canon de Muratori*; Jerome, *De Vir. illustr.* ix.

The fourth Gospel consists entirely of the answer to the questions: What is the Son of God? What are his relations to the divine Being he called his Father? What did he come to accomplish in the world? What was the salvation whereof he is the author? It is not John who speaks, it is Jesus himself, for he alone could teach us about his true divine nature. The phrase with which the evangelist opens his Gospel, which is the summary of all that he is about to say, is the Word, the Verbum, the Logos. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."[1]

Jesus himself never used this expression, which declares his divine nature, in the discourses which St. John himself records. There is nothing in common between it and the *νόος* of the Greeks, the Logos of Plato and of Philo of Alexandria; it records rather the "Word" of the prophets, and the Wisdom personified of the Proverbs and the Books of Wisdom. Perhaps Jesus revealed it to his apostles, when he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.[2] No other word better declared what he is; it implies his eternal origin in the bosom of the Father, where the "Logos" is always living, his distinction from the Father from whom he emanates, in the equality of the same life, and the relation of God to the world created by the "Logos," led by the "Logos" through all time, and saved by the "Logos" made flesh. The whole theodicy is founded on this idea, and the use of the divine word which expresses it is enough to cause St. John to be styled the Theologian and the Theosophist.

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[1] John i. 1.

[2] Luke xxiv. 45.

The evangelists, each in his own manner, answer the question: How the Word, the only begotten Son of the Father, is revealed in his human life? The first three teach us by the narrative of his teaching and his acts. He taught, they say, as an absolute Master; he forgave sins, like God; he ruled over nature, by his own power, as one who has no superior. The fourth Gospel teaches us by direct discourses in which Jesus himself declared his pre-existence, his eternal origin, his community of essence with the Father, his power to enlighten, to create, to save, to give life, and to judge, as the Father.

And in order to make it clear that these discourses are no artificial compositions, they have been set in precise facts, limited as to time and place, with particular care and definite intention. The most transcendent of revelations is thus presented to us in a sensible and popular form, which permits us to read divine truth in those striking images wherein Jesus was pleased to manifest it.[1]

The facts recorded by the evangelist are all, with two exceptions, the multiplication of bread in the desert of Bethsaida and the walking of Jesus on the waves, taken from those periods in the life of Jesus omitted by the earlier evangelists. The miracle of Cana shows the power of Jesus to transform substances, equal to the power which created them. The healing of the son of the officer at Capernaum from a distance, proves that the word of Jesus is mighty and distance does not alter its power. The multiplication of bread shows his creative power; his walking on the waters and calming the storm, his absolute authority over nature; the healing of the man sick of the palsy at Bethesda declares that the most inveterate disease cannot resist him; the man born blind attests that he is the origin of light, and the resurrection of Lazarus proves him the master of death and life.

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[1] Cf. ch. iv.; vi.; ix.; x.; xi.

His discourses, as John records them, by fragments, are but the expression of his divine nature, of his inner life, of his relation to the Father, of his absolute equality with him, in essence, in power, and in energy. No doubt he holds all from the Father; but this origin, while it establishes his distinction of person from the Father, does not detract from his absolute equality, because the Father has given all things to him from eternity, when he begat him as his only Son. And in revealing these inward mysteries, we may remark that Jesus puts forth no doctrine, he simply attests the interior facts of which he has the full consciousness, transcendent facts, since they constitute the very life of God.[1]

He gives, in a word, the deepest revelation of his work, which consists in communicating to all those who believe, the Spirit of his Father and of himself. This idea may be traced in all the parables recorded by the evangelist. The living water of which he spoke to the woman of Samaria, the mysterious Breath mentioned in his conversation with Nicodemus, the Stream springing from the rock, the Light which enlightens the world, the Shepherd who leads the sheep into the pastures, all these symbols express the mysterious and divine spirit of Jesus, the power by which his work is accomplished in the secret place of souls and in humanity.

In all these marvellous discourses there is no abstract metaphysics. Jesus, as St. John reveals him, is no more a philosopher than is the Jesus of the three first Gospels. He did not come to declare the truth by argument, nor to put forth a religious system. His word is the full, living, and adequate expression of that which is; the moral law is his will and his spirit; God, for him, is the living Being, loving and all-powerful, the Father; he translates him into human speech, not the interior conception which is the result of a systematic view, but the reality of which he has an mmediate perception.

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[1] John v.; x.

The earlier Gospels narrate what was seen in Jesus, the fourth what was not seen. But as the visible has always its invisible cause, the facts of the synoptics have their hidden cause in the invisible God who is in Jesus and whom St. John reveals. Those show us God living among men, in their likeness, the other speaks to us of what he is in himself, in the bosom of the Father.

The first Gospels show us the man in Jesus, the fourth reveals the God. All, even the profane, can read the first, the other is reserved for the initiated whom the eternal Light illuminates. Genius, left to its poor human light, cannot comprehend it, but simple souls can understand it, in spite of its sublimity; and whoever opens it should remember the saying of the Master, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

The authenticity of the most divine of the Gospels was never denied among the ancients. One single obscure sect, the Alogiae, repudiated it, but called no witness, and only advanced dogmatic reasons. Those who denied the Word could not accept the Gospel of the Word.

Almost all the apostolic Fathers quote from it, and these have been carefully collected by Dr. Funk.[1]

No objection can be taken to the witness of Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, himself a disciple of St. John, when he attested the existence of this work by John.[1]

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[1] *Opera Patr. Apostol.*, i., p. 565, &c.

It was written in Greek, at Patmos, according to some, at Ephesus, according to others. Tradition is uncertain on this point, as it is on the exact time at which it was written. It is probable that the apostle wrote it in his old age, when, being the only survivor of the direct witnesses to the life and doctrines of Jesus, he was implored by all the bishops of the churches of Asia Minor to lift up his voice and confound the denials by which the nature of Jesus was beginning to be assailed, which continued to multiply for six centuries, and were always overcome by the testimony of the fourth Gospel.

It is not possible to make the silence of Papias an argument against the fourth Gospel. A new fragment of the bishop of Hieropolis, quoted by Thomasius (Book i., p. 344), which I borrow from Dr. Aberle,[2] is a witness that he knew the apostle's work.

Moreover, the genuineness of the four canonical Gospels is a question now settled for ever. It is proved by the fragment of the canon of Muratori, that under the pontificate of Pius I., in 142, there were four Gospels, that the Roman Church recognised no others, that she read them in the same order in which they are now classed, that she considered them as inspired by God, written by one and the same spirit.

It is proved, by a learned and detailed comparison, that all the Gospels may be reconstructed, bit by bit, but entirely, by the aid of quotations gathered out of the works of the Fathers of the first and third centuries, from the author of the Epistle of Barnabas to Tertullian and Irenaeus.

It is proved that not only in the middle of the second century, in 150, there already existed a Latin version of the Gospels, the old Italic version, but that before it there were already two, one made in Africa, the other in Italy. It is proved, thanks to the discoveries of Dr. Cureton, that, before the old Italic version, there existed one in Syriac, called the *Peschito;* and that the translator of the Italic had a Greek translation under his view, carrying on its margin Syriac variants to which he especially referred. It is thus proved that the translations were contemporaneous with the original.

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[1] Iren., *Adv. Haeres.*, III. i. 1.

[2] *Einleitung in das Neue Test.*, p. 112.

It is proved, moreover, by the discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus by Tischendorf, that at the very time when, according to Tertullian, the autograph MS. of the Gospels was still preserved in the apostolic churches, there was a contemporaneous copy. This copy is the Codex Sinaiticus, anterior to the MS. corrections officially required by Constantine.

We have therefore the right to conclude that the Gospels existed from the first century, and that they existed as we now have them. If we have not the original autograph MSS., we have at least contemporary translations. Criticism is satisfied. There is complete harmony on this essential point between it and the tradition of the Church.

IV.

The first characteristic of these documents is that they are, before all, evidence in the strictest sense of the word. They do not discuss, they do not set forth ideas or theories; they explain nothing, they tell facts, they record and affirm words. Hence they are thoroughly impersonal; the author disappears before his subject. If he is at times visible, as for example in the Prologue of the third Gospel, or in the fourth, with an extreme reserve, it is to declare that he is only a witness, that he has been instructed in all things, and that he has seen or heard what he has written.

We cannot discover any expression of interior feelings which the writers experienced in painting the life of their Master. There is no enthusiasm, no cry of admiration, no private reflections. They give their recollections; that is all; and they write them as the Spirit suggests them, or as other witnesses enable them to make them more definite.

Certain events have struck some more than others; the narrative goes more into details, and is more vivid, more fresh in colour. The circumstances in which each of them has written, were among the determining causes of the selection and choice of many facts and words which they might have seen or heard in the life of their Master. The circle of readers to which they addressed themselves contributed not a little to modify their work. They could not speak to Jews who denied that Jesus was the Messiah as to Gentiles without Jewish prejudices, to simple men without learning as to those converts who were nursed in the Jewish or Greek Gnosis, to churches where the Jews sought to blend gospel liberty with legal servitude as to churches free from these irritating questions. He who was admitted, from the beginning, to intimacy with the Master, who had received into his loving soul the deepest confidences of Jesus, who more than others had been struck by those conversations wherein he revealed his divine nature, his eternal filiation, the profound mysteries of faith and salvation by the Spirit, would evidently blend with his testimony a sweetness, a tenderness, a charm, a quickness of memory beyond any other. But all these differences are lost in a higher unity.

Everything is from Jesus in the work of each evangelist. It is he and he alone whose life we see, he alone whom we hear. The sermon on the mount, the parables, the discussions with the Pharisees and Sadducees, the instructions to the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples, the denunciation of false teachers, the prediction of the ruin of the Temple and of Jerusalem, the repeated prophecies of his future passion and death, his conversations with the woman of Samaria and Nicodemus, his solemn declarations that he was Messiah, before the great men of Jerusalem, in Solomon's Porch, his extraordinary declarations of his divine nature, of his equality with the Father, of his function as Messiah symbolised by the rock of Horeb, by the lamps of the Feast of Tabernacles, by all the grand facts of Jewish history, and by the worship which recalled the facts, are all the words of Jesus. To declare that the evangelists, and notably the fourth evangelist, put their own words into their Master's mouth and made him speak, as Livy made the Roman generals speak, is to take away the only title which they all formally claim, is to misunderstand the infinite respect which they had for their Master, is to overwhelm and contradict, without any positive motive, universal and unbroken tradition, and is to declare him a liar who said with the most solemn earnestness: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."[1]

Thus is explained how ignorant men like the fishermen of Galilee, could write a book like the Gospels: they only had to remember. If they had composed a dialogue like Plato, or a treatise like Philo of Alexandria, we should have believed in their ability, and thought that ability suspicious; they would have put their own ideas and their own invention into the work; but they knew nothing. What we see in them above all, is, that under the constant action of Jesus, they gradually put off the popular prejudices of their race, and accepted with entire faith the example and the words of their Master. Themselves existed no longer, it was really their Master who was in them.

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[1] I. John i. 1-3.

In many cases I prefer, as a critic, a simple peasant to a subtle and cautious man of learning. The first will tell me plainly what he has seen; the other wants to give me an explanation. What interests the historian is, first the fact, and afterwards the explanation of the fact. In every hypothesis, before explaining phenomena, we need their verification, and here I mistrust the over-cultivated man, who always looks to his own system. Such a man thinks himself in possession of a perfect instrument; but he deceives himself. It is an admirable instrument for seeing what he wants, and for rejecting what does not suit him.

The evidential character of the Gospels rests not only on the express intention of the authors, solemnly formulated by them, but also and mainly on the will of their Master. "Go," said he to them, when he left them, "and teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."[1] "Ye are witnesses of these things.[2] Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost which will come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."[1]

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[1] Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

[2] Luke xxiv. 48.

Their word was not to be a simple human memory, committed to chance recollection and uncertain consciousness; it was to be guarded and sanctioned by the power of the Spirit of Jesus living in them, suggesting to them at that same hour what they should speak.[2] The unbroken tradition of the Church has always so regarded the evangelists.

It follows from this that it is not possible to distinguish in their work one element peculiar to the writers, and any other peculiar to him of whom they wrote. All which fell from their pen belongs to Jesus, whether as an act of his life, or as a teaching of his doctrine. The act is more or less sharply and vividly described, the teaching is reproduced more or less completely, or in fragments, but both are integral parts of the life and doctrine of the Master. This is the secret of the beauty, simplicity, sanctity, and immortal power of the Gospels; not that the soul and spirit and genius of the writers have passed into them, but the soul, the spirit, and the genius of their hero. He lives in them, acts, speaks, moves, enlightens and sanctifies. His sweetness shines in them and wraps them round, his attraction charms and draws them, his example carries them away; his goodness ever communicates itself to them. We seem to follow in his train, among the poor who surrounded him, with the sinner and the sick whose open sores and hidden wounds he healed; we may listen to his lessons as he gave them to the crowd, may sit with them to hear him, on the summit of the hills of Galilee or on the shore of its lake, may be with him on his journeys, and join the faithful in recognising him as the Son of God. None has ever spoken with such power. and spread abroad so many blessings. His intimate confidences to his disciples, his farewells, his last conversations on the eve of his death, seem addressed to us; his sufferings are seen by us in their terrible extent; his cruel death makes us weep, as it did his friends at the foot of the cross. His marvellous triumph reassures us; and when we see him leave the earth in his glorious Ascension, we feel ourselves full of hope and power, for he has left to us, as to his faithful disciples, the spirit which has conquered the world and which makes us the children of God.

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[1] Acts i. 8.

[2] John xiv. 16

These documents have in them a life, a youth, an eternal freshness, and are like the Christ to whom they bear witness. He was yesterday, he is to-day, he will be to-morrow. Heaven and earth will pass away; his being, his word, will never pass. All who are able to read the Gospels, will find in them consolation; those who love can meditate on them, and they will learn sacrifice; those who will what is good may ask of them, and they will find there the secret of all virtue. The despairing will see therein salvation, and all who think, if they examine them with an upright and simple heart, will be conquered by that divine wisdom which instructs us in the mystery of God, showing us the sorrows of man and the means of comfort. No other knowledge is worth living for.

There are, in history, two sorts of documents: the one a dead letter, the other alive; the first are truly the ruins of peoples, of societies, of civilisations, of vanished races, as stones and carven pillars, parchments or rolls of papyrus written with hieroglyphics or characters in an unknown tongue, no longer living; they have become the property of every man, and they have no longer the living spirit of a people to interpret them; the second remains the property of a nation, a society, a living religion. It is written in a tongue which we speak and hear; it is kept intact by those who live by it and who know its value.

All the Egyptian, Assyrian, Phoenician and the like documents are in the first category. The Gospels occupy the front rank in the second. No book more deserves to be called a living book.

What they record is the very life of millions of consciences who think as they, rule themselves according to them, are consoled by them, and hope in them. They arose in a religious society which justly regards them as its own possession, as its family documents, and one of its most precious treasures. That society which, under the name of the Church, covers the whole world, presents its Gospel to all: but she alone can interpret it. She is its author, since it sprang from her, and surely whoever has thought out a book knows best the meaning of that book.

Were it necessary to prove this simple and yet misunderstood truth, I would say to those who forget it, to all the commentators in fact who take no account of the Church and her traditional doctrine, in order to arrive at the sense of the Gospels: When you attempt to interpret dead documents what method do you follow? You endeavour to reconstitute the people to whom they belonged, you call them up in some degree, you give life to their ashes, and when you see them living before you, with their language, their manners, their doctrines, and all their history, you venture to read the document, and you interpret it with hesitation, for the historic resurrection of a lost civilisation and a vanished people is ever imperfect. But the Gospel documents are not dead, they belong to a people very much alive, and still growing, speaking, and teaching, never ceasing to interpret them read them, and make them live again.

What right have you to treat them like some papyrus discovered in the tomb of a mummy, or like an old parchment forgotten in the archives of a ruined town?

If the Egyptians of Rameses returned to the banks of the Nile, they would, I suppose, be the best interpreters of their writings: Egyptologists would be the first to recognise this. As a sound critic, and without invoking for the Catholic Church the infallible authority which she holds from her Master for the preservation and interpretation of the faith, I demand that she be treated as is every living and intelligent society, and that it be admitted that she, better than anyone else, is able to explain her own books.

If this right be recognised, I make no difficulty in applying to documents, still living, in spite of their great antiquity, the method which consists in replacing these books in the surroundings wherein they were produced, and in borrowing from the knowledge of those surroundings elements of great value for their better understanding.

For instance: In the Gospel authors there is a significant expression of which the interpretation is of the first importance, the expression "Son of God" applied to Jesus. Modern critics who study the Gospels as they study Herodotus or Livy, say truly that the phrase has different senses, and that it is sometimes taken in a metaphorical and moral sense, in which it may be and is applied to men. They declare moreover that in this sense it is to be applied to Jesus.

The question is, how Jesus intended it to be applied to him, and in what manner the apostles applied it. This is a question of fact and of testimony. The Church, as guardian of the apostolic tradition, repeating with them and after them, from age to age, what they taught, affirms that the title of Son of God has always been, since St. Peter gave it for the first time, until our own day, a title implying no metaphorical and moral sonship, but an absolute sonship, in the identity of the same divine nature.

Criticism can prove nothing in opposition to such a testimony. No doubt reason is free to refuse faith in the word of the Church, as in that of the apostles and of Jesus; but I do not understand how it can say to the authors of the books themselves or, what is the same thing, to the faithful guardians of those works: You do not know what you write about and what you read. In fact, reason knows nothing whatever about it.

Understood in the Catholic sense, the expression may appear narrow or shocking to some minds; but if Jesus accepted it in the Catholic sense, the historian has only to declare this fact, and he is false to history if he refuses to do so.

V.

Another characteristic of the Gospel documents is their number, variety, and indissoluble harmony.

Their number is necessary to the value of the testimony, to guarantee and to confirm it. Four witnesses have greater weight than one, when their word, in spite of individual differences, remains unanimous.

Variety is not of less importance; and necessarily exists where there is number. Four witnesses telling the same thing in exactly identical terms would be confounded in one. The validity of the testimony demands depositions which are fundamentally accordant, yet diverse in detail. The Gospel narratives, compared with each other, present this characteristic. The history of Jesus, entirely composed of these intermingled narratives, will prove it to the reader; I cannot do better than refer him to the work itself. I must, however, premise that I have examined, with the most scrupulous attention, the contradictions which certain critics have declared that they see in the manifold narrative of the four evangelists; but have never been able to discover them. I have indeed always avoided recognising one fact alone when the details proved to me that there were two, and in this manner many contradictions vanish. I will quote, as an example, the question of the blind men at Jericho. I admit two miracles, one at the entrance into the town, the other on leaving it; but I will ask the commentators who have desired to see only one, on what motive they base their opinion. If, according to St. Luke, a certain blind man was healed when Jesus arrived there, his testimony ought not to be rejected; and if, according to St. Matthew and St. Mark, two others, of whom one was Bartimaeus, were healed when Jesus went away, their narrative should also be accepted. The tradition was confused, they answer; hence the confusion of the narrators; but they can know nothing about it, and cannot establish their point.

I will mention further the two genealogies of Jesus, that of St. Matthew (i. 1-16) and that of St. Luke (iii. 23-28). It is said that they contradict each other; if the first be true the second is not so, and again, if the second be authentic, the first cannot be so.

This argument could not be assailed did it not rest on an erroneous hypothesis. Both genealogies may be true. It is quite natural that they should be different, that one should give the ancestors of Jesus through Heli, of whom Joseph was the legal heir: as St. Luke does; and that the other should enumerate the ancestors of Joseph through Jacob, according to his natural relationship: as St. Matthew does. This is called an evasion; but I have an equal and better right to consider it as history.[1]

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[1] See Appendix B: *The Two Genealogies of Jesus.*

An essential condition for understanding the harmony of the four Gospel documents, is that we form an exact idea of the part played by their writers. They did not declare that they said everything, when they reported a fact or a discourse; they noted some details, some fragments, and that is enough for history.

What one saw in profile the other saw in full face; such a fact appeared striking to one, another to another. From the liberty left to the narrators resulted omissions more or less voluntary, pictures more or less complete; it would be a mistake, in comparing them, to argue from the omission of a detail to the falseness of the detail in a narrative which contained it. The true part of impartial criticism, when comparing documents, is to supplement one by the other.

The obvious differences between the four evangelists have many and precise causes, which I will not enumerate; they may be all explained on a little reflection by the personality of the author, the end at which he aimed, the readers whom he had immediately in view, and the definite historical circumstances of his surroundings. These circumstances often placed in relief many acts and words of Jesus, which always remained for them a model at which to look, and a doctrinal rule to follow.

Thus when the strife between the Judaisers and the converted Gentiles rent the early Churches, it is evident that the word of the Master when he prophesied the conversion of the Gentiles, and the touching scenes in which he praised their faith when he met with it, would be a living recollection in the minds of the disciples. These circumstances determine the end of the writers, who, while giving their testimony to what Jesus had done and taught, confirmed the faith and cut short all dispute. The circle of readers was in some measure determined by the end, as the end was determined by the circumstances ; and the living Spirit of their Master who was gone gave to the evangelists the necessary power to discern what they ought to say, or to put out of sight what must be still kept secret. Everything in them was subordinate to that inner spirit which assisted them, better no doubt than national genius inspires those who tell the history of their country. Whatever was their work, whether meditation and recollection, whether they enquired from various witnesses about the life of the Master, whether they consulted earlier writings, the Spirit was there to guard them against inattention and fraud, and to ensure the full truth of their testimony.

VI.

The indissoluble harmony between the four Gospels has been always recognised, in spite of their differences, from very remote antiquity. It is the universal tradition in the Church. Every one of these books containing the very word of God, it was impossible to admit disagreement between them. The word of God cannot contradict itself. Thus, from the middle of the second century, concordances, "diatessaron," as each was called, were published to reduce the four inspired narratives to harmony. This *à priori* unity is justified by critical study, and by an attentive comparison of the documents. Not only the three first or synoptic Gospels, so called on account of the manifest likeness of their plan, agree together, but they are in harmony with the fourth, in spite of profound apparent divergences.

The first examination of this last work shows, indeed, that in nothing does it recall its three predecessors. The facts, the geographical and chronological setting, the discourses, are all different. Certain critics have been quick to suppose these differences amounted to a contradiction, and they formulated this dilemma: If the synoptics are correct in the way in which they retrace the life of Jesus, St. John has given us a fantastic history; if the discourses recorded by the three first Gospels are the true discourses of Jesus, those of St. John are an artificial composition; and conversely, if the fourth Gospel is truthful in its narrative and discourses, the three first cannot be so.

The real and evident differences which we must admit between the synoptic Gospels and the fourth, do not only not authorise us to argue that there is a contradiction, but they show on the contrary the indissoluble harmony of the four documents. St. John does not contradict his predecessors, he completes and explains them, from the geographical and chronological setting of the life of the Master, of the facts which form the groundwork of this life, and the discourses which sum up his teaching.

The three first Gospels have given Galilee and Jerusalem as the sole theatre of the ministry of Jesus; the narrative of St. John proves that before he preached the Kingdom of God in Galilee, Jesus, during a whole year, preached in Judaea and revealed himself solemnly in the city by driving the traders from the Temple. The synoptics speak expressly only of the last journey of Jesus to Jerusalem for the Feast at which he was to die; St. John mentions all his different journeys to the Holy City, his retreat into Peraea, beyond Jordan, and to Ephraim, on the borders of the desert. The synoptics do not begin the narrative of his public life until the imprisonment of John the Baptist; the fourth Gospel makes it begin with the baptism of Jesus, and fixes its total duration by the three Passovers which he mentions.[1] The synoptics give us no starting-point for the chronological classification of the facts of his public life; St. John marks them with extreme precision by the various journeys of Jesus to Jerusalem,[1] at the great Jewish feasts. The synoptics, not having enumerated the various sojourns of their Master in the city, could not tell us what he did there, nor the solemn teaching which he gave; but St. John narrates them with great fulness and detail.

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[1] John ii. 13; vi. 4; xii. 1; xiii.

It is plain that all this precious account by no means contradicts the synoptics, it fills up their gaps, and has, moreover, the merit of explaining their narrative. It is impossible without them to reconstruct the touching drama of the life of Jesus, and to understand his special method of preaching and teaching. His main contentions, his most sublime teaching, needed for their theatre the Jewish metropolis, and for their witnesses the national authorities. There the career of the Messiah had to end, there he had to show himself in splendour as a king. Galilee, for Jesus, was a relatively peaceful spot, where, far from that centre of hatred which threatened him from his earliest days, he was able to preach the Kingdom of God to fishermen and the poor, to gather his disciples, and fix the basis of his work in those faithful minds destined to spread it abroad. But if he retired to Galilee, as the synoptics tell us,[2] John alone gives the historic motive of this retreat.[3]

According to the first three Gospels it is plain that Jesus, as a Miracle-worker, Master and Teacher, acts and speaks with absolute personal authority. When he heals the sick, commands the evil spirits, or raises the dead, we do not see him appeal to a superior principle whence he takes his power; he speaks, lays his hands, gives his orders; and the sick are healed, the demons flee, the dead rise. When he teaches it is just the same: he forgives sin, as God; he promulgates a moral law in his own name, as God. He demands that his disciples recognise in him the true Son of the living God; and praises them for having reached so supreme and complete a faith. We ask, then, what such a Being may be, what is his nature, what is his true relation with him whom he calls his Father, what is his work upon the conscience, who is the Messianic personage foretold by the prophets and realised in him, what is the secret of the Kingdom founded by him?

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[1] John v. 1; vii. 2; x. 22. The synoptics, however, contain certain allusions to the different journeys of Jesus to Jerusalem; but our only definite information is from the fourth Gospel. (Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke ix. 51, xiii. 22.)

[2] Matt. iv. 12; Mark i. 14; Luke iv. 14.

[3] John iv. 3.

The three first Gospels only record those words of Jesus wherein all things were spoken in parables and in signs; it was reserved for the fourth Gospel to give us the full light, by recording the most solemn and intimate discourses wherein Jesus put forth those unspeakable mysteries in a tongue which no creature could speak.

Jesus is not a Son of God, he is the Son; the name he constantly gives himself. He is one with the Father,[1] of the same essence; before Abraham was,[2] before the world was, he was, and he was in the Father.[3] He has received all from the Father: power, light, and life; he is the judge, the enlightener, the life-giver; he communicates his Spirit, and with his Spirit, life eternal. He is the express, the only and perfect, manifestation of the Father; whoso sees him, sees the Father; who loves him, loves the Father; he is in the Father, as the Father is in him.[4]

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[1] John x. 30.
[2] John viii. 58.
[3] John xvii. 5.
[4] John xiv. 10.

These transcendent revelations to the conscience and intellect of every man can only be accepted by him who has faith in the words of Jesus. They transport us into a divine sphere, inaccessible to genius, but open to the simple soul and the upright heart.

Not only do such discourses not contradict the moral teaching of Jesus and his parables, but they give them their sole explanation.

If Jesus spoke as St. John makes him speak, I understand the Miracle-worker and the Teacher of the Synoptics, the absolute sovereignty with which he acts, and the authority with which he formulates his law. So the Son of God, the only and the true, without metaphor and without reserve, must give his orders and his laws ; if not, the Jesus of the Synoptics becomes an inscrutable enigma, and we ask how a simple ambassador of God dared to assume a mode of being, acting, and speaking, which belongs to God alone.

The unity of the documents is complete. They can only be opposed one to the other by interpretations which do violence to history. Those who start from the hypothesis that Jesus was only a man, are evidently obliged to sacrifice the whole of the fourth Gospel, facts as well as discourses ; we cannot admit the one and repudiate the others, they form an indivisible whole. The writer who attests the facts guarantees the discourses by his testimony ; his work is one and entire, it holds together in all its parts and is in union with the work of the first three Gospels. It is impossible to write a life of Jesus according to any historical and critical rules apart from the teaching of John. The first condition for writing the history of a great teacher is to show the idea which such an one has of himself; now the principal object of St. John is to reveal to us this idea in Jesus. The historian has not to ask if a given revelation is in conflict with his own ideas and philosophy; his part is more important and more disinterested: he owes it to us to declare fully the testimony of those who have seen and heard.

The first and the great mistake of modern criticism, whether Protestant or infidel, in the vast and dogged labour which it has given to the Gospel documents, since the eighteenth century, in France, in England, in Switzerland, and above all in Germany, is that it treats these documents as a dead letter. It has deliberately forgotten that these are not books which have become general property, but they are the inalienable possession of the Catholic Church. Even if, to these critics, the Church is not a divine institution, which has received from its founder the infallible guardianship of his words, written or spoken, it should not misconceive its high value as an organised society. Moreover, criticism has no authority to judge our sacred books as a mere papyrus of the old Egyptians, which has outlived the people who traced thereon the symbols of their thought.

The constant witness of a religion like that of Jesus, with an unbroken tradition of eighteen hundred years, leaving on each century the strong impression of its faith, in numberless works, eminent by the doctrine they put forth, by the virtues which they teach, and by the genius which has conceived them, cannot be lightly put aside, and is a powerful force. And as this tradition is the living interpreter of the Gospels, a sound and impartial criticism must have recourse to it, in order to understand them, to know their true origin, and their intention.

Every book, considered apart from the society to which it belongs, and of which it is a constituent principle, is at the mercy of the first comer. The Gospels, torn from the religious tradition of which they are the most ancient and the most sacred monument, have been the prey of all the critics.

In order to make them speak, they must be reanimated; for the soul of a document is in the surroundings which have inspired it, in the ideas which have dominated these surroundings, in the passions which agitated it, in the manners which it describes. The modern critics have endeavoured to reconstitute these surroundings artificially, and, as might be expected, they have borrowed them from the Church, from the writings of her doctors, and from the very works which they had before them and tried to understand. The school of Tübingen is particularly famous in these delicate researches, but it has been led astray by Baur,[1] whose chief hypothesis has been proved arbitrary and exaggerated. To see in the primitive Christianity of the first and second centuries nothing but the antagonism of Judaising Christians, which is represented by Peter, James, and John; and an universal Christianity, represented by Paul, is to contract the horizon at pleasure, to give to a detail the value of the whole, and to take an exaggerated feature as the measure of a complete physiognomy. All the apostolic writings, and the Gospels in the first rank, having been interpreted from this narrow and exclusive point of view, it is easy to guess what they have become in the hands of the critic and his school.

But this hostile labour has not availed to solve the problem committed to these documents; it has not explained the method of their formation, nor found the secret of their resemblance and their diversity; it has not explained the intimate union which brings them together as members of the same body; it has not discovered the precise order of their origin.

It is sufficient to review the numerous works written on this subject, in order to show the radical weakness of those who have invented those various problems, in which every kind of hypothesis has been maintained. Some have supposed an earlier Gospel as the source from which the first three evangelists derived their materials.[1] Herder opposed this view; our Gospels, according to him, took their origin from an oral Gospel. Wandering teachers, a body of trained reciters, went about preaching the Gospel; their stories, learnt by heart, embellished and enriched, were the source of our written Gospels. There has also been a theory that small tracts,[2] edited by anonymous persons, historical fragments of the life of Jesus, have served above all to compose the Gospel of St. Luke.

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[1] *Vorlesungen über Neu. Test. Theologie.*

It has been asserted that the Gospel of St. Matthew was, rearranged; that there was a primitive Matthew which had disappeared, but had served for the composition of the first Gospel as we now have it, and of the second, attributed to St. Mark. Some, however, have given the precedence to St. Mark and considered him to be the source of St. Matthew and St. Luke.[3]

These undefined hypotheses which have succeeded one another show their weakness, for as each comes it destroys its predecessors, and no one of them has been able to endure for many years; they have been forgotten with their inventors. When an independent criticism shall have brought about some agreement among its authorised representatives, it will be time to examine its conclusions. Till then, the witness of the Church in regard to the Gospels and their authors may despise these contradictory voices, which scarcely penetrate beyond the walls of a school or the narrow limits of a party.

It is no less serious a fault of interpretation to misconstrue the evidential character of the Gospels. Instead of seeing in them only a narrative of facts attested by well-instructed and honest witnesses, an attempt has been made to distinguish in their works the substance from the form; the most moderate have accepted the one and set aside the other, not considering that perhaps while they attack the form they destroy the substance. Thus the first chapters of the third Gospel have been, according to them, a charming poem whose beauty has struck them with admiration; but all these fresh and lively details were only a poetic veil to manifest the saintliness of John the Baptist and to embellish the conception and birth of Jesus. They have thus been able to dispose of Christ's miraculous conception.[1]

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[1] Eichhorn, *Einleitung in d. N. Test.*

[2] Schleiermacher, *Kritische Versuch über die Schriften des Lukas.*

[3] Reuss, *Histoire Evangélique* i. 189.

The whole of the Gospel of John, in like manner, has been held to be a work of theology and not of history, which had as its end the dogmatic explanation, in its transcendent theories, of the doctrine of the author concerning the divine nature of Jesus.[2] This interpretation, which has a semblance of truth and moderation, is the ruin of the authority of the Gospels, and is moreover in formal opposition to the authors of these documents. Two of them declare that they are only historians who relate faithfully what they have themselves heard and seen, or what they have learned from the mouth of immediate witnesses. Far from suspecting their good faith and attributing to them a vulgar lie, we ought to accept them at their own valuation. Since the eighteenth century no criticism which respects itself has dared to treat the evangelists as impostors; even by minimising the epithet, and by reducing the imposition to a literary artifice, in Oriental mode. We may deny that they had worldly knowledge and academic culture, but we may not question their honesty and sincerity.

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[1] Reuss, *Histoire Evangélique* i. 203.

[2] Reuss, *Théologie Johannique* i. 214.

All these authors gave their lives to uphold what they declared to be the truth. Of all the proofs of good faith none is more sacred, none more triumphant among men. A simple affirmation may be doubted; one sealed by martyrdom, and by the blood of witnesses, demands the confidence of the most sceptical enquirer.

VII.

Historical criticism must not only examine the written sources and their authors, the testimony and the witnesses, it must weigh the contents of books and documents, the facts and the doctrines recorded therein. The facts of the life of Jesus, the religious doctrine which he has inculcated on his disciples, and by their means on the conscience of men are the facts and doctrines recorded in the four Gospels and the substance of the deposition of each witness. Now all the facts, I do not say some facts, I say all the important facts without exception, from the birth of Jesus up to his departure from the world, are miraculous facts. All his doctrine relative to his person and nature, his moral teaching as well as the solemn declarations by which he revealed his work and his relations with the Father who sent him, and man whom he came to save, transcends reason; and is essentially prophetic, for it sets forth truths superior to the experience and the reasonings of men. It can only be accepted by faith; its credibility can only be attested by miracles, and the effects which it produces in the soul of a believer.

The Gospels are an unbroken web of prophecies and of miracles, which we may not seek to minimise, but must accept absolutely and directly. I am not ignorant of the violent revolt against miracles, against all that is transcendental and unseen; nor of the distrust of witnesses who record these things. This revolt and obstinate distrust form one of the traits of modern unbelief. Its causes are many and profound; they would demand a long and searching analysis, which does not enter into the design of this Introduction. I will remark only that the great progress of experimental science, and its marvellous applications, have not been without influence on the intellectual and psychological condition of this generation.

The exclusive pursuit of the exact and natural sciences has subdued mind to matter; we have asked from material forces the explanation of everything; by degrees we have come to hold as nothing all that is beyond matter; and if, in order to satisfy the want of an indestructible unity in superior intelligence, we have sought for the universal principle which rules nature and man; instead of looking above nature and man, we have sought it blindly in one or the other. Hence have sprung Positivism, Materialism, and Pantheism; which have more or less weight with a great number of minds among those who teach; and their secret alliance unconsciously impresses the crowd. These three systems form a sort of diffused atmosphere in which the bulk of men in our age and country moves and breathes.

The man who would speak of miracle and prophecy to a generation bowed under the yoke of such an opinion, can hardly gain a hearing. If I do not hesitate to do so with the force of mature conviction and with full faith, neither do I hesitate to submit the miracles and the prophecies of the life of Jesus to the examination and the proof of criticism; but there is criticism and criticism, just as there are different weights and measures. What, then, is that true and sure criticism, at once the safeguard to the legitimate independence of the historian, to the truth of the facts which he examines, to the antiquity of documents and the respect due to the witnesses?

There are three elements in the human spirit: first principles, systems, and beliefs. Principles cannot be discussed; they may be all reduced to the principle of contradiction or identity, causality, or efficient cause. In virtue of these axioms, all absurdities, all contradictions, and effects without cause, can exist only in the imagination. First principles are judged of none, they judge all systems and all beliefs, they are the measure of all truth.

Systems are composed of co-ordinate propositions, by the aid of which certain cultivated minds attempt to explain the origin of things. The mass of men cannot construct them; and can only accept them passively with a more or less blind confidence; they often determine individual beliefs and the opinion of an age; but faith and the first principles of reason are within the reach of all.

Criticism then can be founded only on three bases: primary truths, or the systems and the faith of each man. If it invokes a faith as its measure, it has value only with those who accept the belief; if it invokes a particular system, it has authority only over the partisans of this system. If, on the contrary, it appeals to essential truths and the unchangeable principles of reason, it bears sway over all, for reason thus understood sways every intelligent being.

Whoso judges facts and the documents in which they are recorded, according to the spirit of his time and its prevalent opinion, is exposed to error; for ages change their spirit and opinion varies. Whoso judges them according to his personal system and his little philosophy will be equally deceived, for no philosophy, however wide it boasts itself, is the measure of all things, nor can it contain all that is.

We must have a reason larger and more certain: now the only one which presents itself, entirely guaranteed from this double point of view, is reason in its fundamental axioms, which are invariable, eternal, and absolute. I call upon criticism to judge by this light all the facts of the Gospel and all the miracles, and I confidently await its verdict.

This criticism belongs neither to one age nor to one school; but being universal and necessary, it sways all systems and all times. It has been practised by all men who have respected their own reason, and have not committed suicide by scepticism. No one can deny it, unless he renounce his own intelligent and reasonable nature; on it depend faiths and religions, systems of philosophy and positive science, books and documents.

The Christian religion, the theology and the sacred books of the Church of Jesus do not avoid it or fear it, rather they appeal to it; and I do not hesitate to say that they only, amid all beliefs, religions, systems, and documents, are capable of standing against it. Neither the religions of Buddha, of Zoroaster, nor of Mahomet, nor the books on which these three religions depend; neither Pantheism, nor Materialism, nor Positivism, can resist the criticism of reason brought back to its first principles of causality and contradiction. Its inexorable judgment will leave nothing standing but the monotheism of the Jews, the theology of Christians, and the sacred documents of the Old and New Testaments. Just in proportion as the modern man, disabused of the vain systems in vogue, no longer demands of them the measure of what he should hold as truth, he will no longer consult Kant, Spinoza, Hegel, Voltaire, or other casual teachers; he will fall back on first principles, and on the unassailable truths which form their eternal basis, and he will do justice to him who came to teach the origin and end of life, the holy law to which he must conform, the power to obey it, in fact, all that enlightens and consoles, charms and comforts him.

The armed spirit of true criticism is the vigilant and incorruptible guardian of the frontiers of history; it turns back pitilessly those who wish to introduce into it, as real facts, the caprices and dreams of their fancy; it proscribes and unmasks the obstructionists who desire to mutilate the domain of reality, by suppressing real facts, because they do not bear the trade mark of their system or the stamp of their house. History is a territory which is still disputed; we must not permit usurpers to confiscate or settle on it. Certain men have wished to convert it into a fief reserved for Atheism, Pantheism, and Materialism; the duty of criticism is to drive them back. History should belong only to pure reason; it demands a large and liberal spirit, at once disinterested and honest.

Now criticism, in the name of pure reason, must demand: whether the supernatural facts of the Gospel, the origin and the birth of Jesus, his education and visible growth, his human and divine nature, his vocation, the acts of his public life and their interdependence, his works, teaching, laws, and miracles, his strifes, his way of living and acting, his death and resurrection, are all historic realities which must be truthfully narrated and described. We have not first to ask how these things can have happened, whether they can be measured by our minds, whether they are more or less in conformity with our prejudices and our culture; we have to ask if they are. When they are once established, the mind can endeavour to understand them, to explain them, to show their greatness and their credibility; it has not the right to minimize or deny, to mutilate or travesty them. The honest historian will not trouble himself about the caprices of reason; he will write down with entire conscientiousness what he has ascertained; he does not ask if a fact is miraculous or not, whether natural or supernatural: he describes it as he sees it. All that we have a right to ask of him is that he should be a conscientious, an honest, and a truthful witness; and he must accept only the statements of conscientious, honest, and truthful witnesses. He must bear himself at an equal distance from that credulity which accepts everything even absurdity and fables ; and from that proud distrust which refuses testimony as soon as it comes into conflict with his system, his science, and with that culture, which he wrongly defines as reason The prejudiced man is unfit to write history, for he is bound to write it falsely

VIII.

As regards the reality of prophecy, I will draw the attention of the reader to this marvellous fact which will serve as a prevenient justification of the prophetic discourses of Jesus which are reproduced in their entirety in this work. The Christ is more than prophet ; he is the great, the only one of whom prophecy was spoken. Before he was born his history was written.

As we turn over the Old Testament, whose antiquity and integrity no critic will question, all may read as follows :—

"And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham and said . . . And IN THY SEED shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."—*Gen.* xxii. 15-18.

A prophet, Balaam, son of Beor, said : "There shall come A STAR out of Jacob, and A SCEPTRE shall rise out of Israel."—*Numbers* xxiv. 15-17.

The dying Jacob said : "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, TILL HE COME THAT IS TO BE SENT ; and he shall be the expectation of nations."—*Gen.* xlix. 10.

"And there shall come forth A ROD out of the stem of Jesse, and A BRANCH shall grow out of his roots : and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. . . . In that day there shall be A ROOT OF JESSE which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek."—*Isaiah* xi. 1, 2, 10.

"Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down RIGHTEOUSNESS: let the earth open, and let them bring forth SALVATION, and let RIGHTEOUSNESS spring up together." —*Isaiah* xlv. 8.

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear A SON, and shall call his name IMMANUEL."—*Isaiah* vii. 14.

"But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me THAT IS TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL."—*Micah* v. 2.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE."—*Isaiah* ix. 6.

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for OUR GOD."—*Isaiah* xl. 3.

"Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, THY SAVIOUR cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him."—*Isaiah* lxii. 11.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me."—*Isaiah* lxi. 1.

"He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I WILL BE HIS FATHER, AND HE SHALL BE MY SON."—*II. Sam.* vii. 13, 14

"The Lord hath said unto me, THOU ART MY SON; THIS DAY HAVE I BEGOTTEN THEE."—*Ps.* ii. 7.

"He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth."—*Ps.* lxxxix. 26, 27.

"I CAME OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE MOST HIGH."—*Ecclesiasticus* xxiv. 3.

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."—*Isaiah* xxxv. 4, 5, 6.

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this IS OUR GOD; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is THE LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—*Isaiah* xxv. 8, 9.

"He hath found out all the way of knowledge, and hath given it unto Jacob his servant, and to Israel his beloved. Afterward did he shew himself upon earth, and conversed with men."—*Baruch* iii. 36, 37.

"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a PROPHET from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, LIKE UNTO ME; unto him ye shall hearken. . . . And I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."—*Deut.* xviii., 15, 18, 19.

"Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I AM HE THAT DOTH SPEAK: behold, it is I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him THAT BRINGETH GOOD TIDINGS, THAT PUBLISHETH PEACE; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" —*Isaiah* lii. 6, 7.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."—*Jeremiah* xxxi. 31, 32, 33.

"And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."—*Ezekiel* xi. 19, 20.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."—*Joel* ii. 28.

"I will open my mouth in A PARABLE: I will utter DARK SAYINGS of old."—*Psalm* lxxviii. 2.

"I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment."—*Ezekiel* xxxiv. 15, 16.

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."—*Isaiah* xlii. 1-4.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, THY KING cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."—*Zech.* ix. 9.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—*Ps.* cxviii. 24-26.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."—*Isaiah* liii. 3.

"Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."—*Isaiah* xlv. 15.

"I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me."—*Ps.* lxix. 8, 9.

"Therefore let us lie in wait for the RIGHTEOUS: because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the Law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressings of our education. He professeth to have the knowledge of God: and he calleth himself the SON OF THE LORD. He was made to reprove our thoughts. He is grievous unto us even to behold: for his life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion. We are esteemed of him as counterfeits: he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness: he pronounceth the end of the just to be blessed, and maketh his boast that God is his father."—*Wisdom* ii. 12-16.

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against HIS ANOINTED.' —*Ps.* ii. 2.

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."—*Ps.* xli. 9.

"Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."—*Ps.* lxix. 20, 21.

"I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me."—*Ps.* lv. 2-5.

"For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him." —*Ps.* lxxi. 10, 11.

"If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them."—*Zech.* xi. 12 13.

"Awake, O sword, against MY SHEPHERD, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite THE SHEPHERD, and the sheep shall be scattered."—*Zech.* xiii. 7.

"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me and such as breathe out cruelty."—*Ps.* xxvii. 12.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."—*Isaiah* liii. 7.

"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."—*Isaiah* l. 6.

"Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness, and prove his patience. Let us condemn him with a shameful death."—*Wisdom* ii. 19, 20.

"Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be no more remembered."—*Jeremiah* xi. 19.

"They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."—*Psalm* xxii. 16-18.

"And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."—*Zech.* xiii. 6.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."—*Isaiah* liii. 5.

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors."—*Isaiah* liii. 12.

"They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me."—*Lament.* iii. 53.

"My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer THINE HOLY ONE to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."—*Psalm* xvi. 9

"O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."—*Hosea* xiii. 14.

"And in that day there shall be a ROOT OF JESSE, which shall stand for an ENSIGN of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."—*Isaiah* xi. 10.

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."—*Ps.* ii. 8.

"Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."—*Ps.* cx. 1.

"At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands."—*Isaiah* xvii. 7, 8.

"And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish, . . . his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats."—*Isaiah* ii. 17-20.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered."—*Zech.* xiii. 1, 2.

"Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb . . . . and now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a LIGHT TO THE GENTILES, that thou mayest be my SALVATION unto the end of the earth. . . . Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee."—*Isaiah* xlix. 1, 5-6, 18.

"I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it."—*Jerem.* xii. 7, 8.

"And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts."—*Hosea* ii. 10, 11.

"And after three score and two weeks shall MESSIAH BE CUT off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."—*Daniel* ix. 26.

"But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people: and at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss."—*I. Kings* ix. 6, 7.

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the SON OF MAN came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a

kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."
—*Daniel* vii. 13, 14.

I beg the reader to remark that these extracts, which might easily be increased in number, are taken from the Bible as preserved by the Jews; the books of which this Bible was composed were all edited many centuries before Jesus, and altogether they embrace a period of more than fourteen hundred years.

These fragmentary passages form a complete and detailed picture of the Messiah; it might easily be believed that they were written by the evangelists after his advent. All the essential features are found there: his kinship with Abraham, his descent from Jacob and David, his birth from a virgin, the universal expectation directed towards him, his birth in the little town of Bethlehem, his origin from everlasting in the Bosom of God, his Divine Sonship, his names Emmanuel and Saviour, his flight into Egypt, his retreat into the despised land of Nazareth, the coming of his predecessor, his divine unction by the fulness of the Spirit, his functions as prophet, evangelist, miracle-worker, his character of goodness without limit, and infinite gentleness, the mystery wherein his divine nature was wrapped, the failure of his mission in the midst of his people, the persecution and hatred by which he was pursued, all the details of the death he was to undergo, his agony, his betrayal for thirty pieces of silver by one of his own disciples, his abandonment by the rest of them, his cross, his burial, his resurrection, and, last of all, his dazzling triumph proclaimed before the face of the world and in the full light of history, by the destruction of idolatry, by the terrible chastisement of his persecutors, by the conquest of the gentile world, by the establishment of his own reign in the midst of that world which, in attacking him, proves his indestructible power and his eternity.

IX.

All these documents, dispersed and scattered through the ages, are like the stones of some huge edifice, hewn and carved by unknown workmen, under the inspiration of an invisible architect whose designs were not fully disclosed to any creature.

When Christ appeared, he revealed in his person and work, in his doctrine and life the mystery which had been hidden from all generations.[1] One by one he accomplished all the prophecies, and realised in every detail what they had announced : this he said to all, and endeavoured to persuade his nation of it.

The doctors refused to understand him ; they could not grasp the spiritual meaning of the symbolical language used by their prophets, nor free themselves from their pride of race and religion. Revolted by the elements of sorrow, humiliation, and death, which were among the essential characteristics of the true Messiah, they were unable to raise themselves to his divine nature, and to unite in a bold synthesis the double mystery of divinity and suffering humanity united in him. They could not recognise the imperfection of their law which was to disappear before the living law of Christ ; and though their obstinate blindness before the Messiah had been announced by their prophets, they never suspected their obstinacy and blindness, and dashed themselves against the corner-stone whereon was to be erected the whole building of God.

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[1] Ephes. iii. 9.

Some few, chosen from among the ignorant and simple, and these the most despised, were alone initiated into this Messianic truth; they learnt, in the school of Jesus, what the wise of their nation had been unable to see. Their faith, illuminated by the Spirit, confessed the divine Sonship and the awful mystery of the sorrows of the Son of Man; they recognised in him the invincible Lion of Judah, and the Lamb of God who endured to be slain. It is to these poor uneducated men that we are indebted for the knowledge of him who, being in the form of God, made himself of no reputation, in the form of a creature, and was obedient to his Father, even to the death on the cross—that punishment of slaves.

In repudiating Jesus, in their determination not to understand him, the Jews lost the true sense of their Book. They preserve it, however, and read it; but do not understand it: for them it is a closed and sealed book. The Messianic idea, the hero and his work, are its bond of unity and life; and these things escape their notice: they are without meaning except as explained by the doctrine, the person, and the work of Jesus.

Now here is an event unique in history, which we commend to all who reject prophecy and the prophetic books. The whole Bible is Messianic. If we seek for its spirit, its most profound and truest sense, we find that it looks to the coming Christ—to this future deliverer; it promises him, calls upon him, describes him in figures, and prepares the way for him. The greatest doctors among the Jews, who wrote the Targums of the first and second centuries, Onkelos, Jonathan, and Akiba, never hesitated thus to interpret the sacred Book. The passages we have quoted had no difficulty for them; and in understanding them as we do, they did not consider they were preparing their own confusion; for the grand words of the seers of Israel apply only to the prophet who was cast out by the Sanhedrin, to him who triumphed on the cross.

Modern commentators, who are witnesses of the undying triumph of Jesus, have but one weapon of attack against the truth of prophecy ; either to deny the reality of the Gospel history, or, by a narrow interpretation, to nullify the prophecy of that history. They have revised the Bible, and taken care in interpreting it, to get rid of the mystical sense and often to falsify the literal sense ; but their pains have been thrown away. The impartial study of the Biblical documents leads to this result : the words of the seers have no more perfect justification than the history of Jesus ; their sense is fulfilled only in him. They always more than fill the limits of the first sketch, and in the second sketch, which covers the whole, they attain to the Messiah and his work, such as God prepared them in his unsearchable providence, from the beginning of time and of all created things.

The religion taught by Jesus and realised in him embraces in its living force the whole of mankind. It is like a great book of history in two volumes, one containing the prophecy of what is to be, the other the narrative of the events prophesied. Only the Spirit of God could have written the former ; he only could realise what the second contained and allow men to understand and narrate it. The two volumes are open to every eye ; no one can now falsify them. If Christians attacked the first, the Jews would raise a protest from the four corners of the world ; and if heretics or modern Pagans should attack the second, the Church, as wide as the human race, would rise to defend the Gospels.

These are the two great witnesses of God. He is thus seen to be master of the times, since he announces, long before, what they will be, and has brought them to pass, as he foretold them, by the voice of prophecy. No criticism, interpretation, or system, no infidelity, can injure this colossal work ; but God has been pleased, in his relation with man, to confound the vain wisdom which boasts itself against him, and to disdain that culture which, under the name of science and philosophy, is eager to destroy his work. The work lives on, unhurt and increasing, astounding those who dash themselves against it and calling into its light the simple, the suffering, the humble, and even great souls, if they will only cease to take the measure of God, and give themselves to love him.

X.

If prophecy exists, and we have seen with what historic power it impresses itself on the unprejudiced mind, there may well be miracles also ; if a Jesus of prophecy, then also a Jesus the worker of miracles.

I put this question not to a Pantheist as such, not to a Materialist, or Positivist, or sceptic, or unbeliever, or believer—I put it to man. Before we are ranged under a system or a creed, before we are of this or that school or age, we all share in the same intelligent and free nature, seeking after truth and goodness. Hence we feel ourselves united through time and space, in spite of divergent civilisations and natural boundaries. Are there miracles or not? I am told on the one hand that they are impossible. All miracles are legends or myths without reality save in the imagination which conceived them, in the credulity or imposture of the narrators. Prophecies are only books composed after the event ; men know neither prediction nor miracle.

Such is the answer of the Pantheist, Materialist, or Positivist. According to these systems, it is logical ; but it is not the answer given by mankind. It is not yet demonstrated that Pantheism and Materialism are the truth, nor that Positivism is an infallible rule. If these philosophers are deceived and in error, as it would be easy to show, their answer is worth nothing; and for him who rejects them, their dogma of the impossibility of miracles has no authority.

There is moreover an insult to the dignity of man, and a failure in the respect to which every witness is entitled, in all these systems which take upon themselves to regard as knaves and fools those who have solemnly and seriously reported miracles they have seen and prophetic discourses they have heard. Criticism thus conceived is not worthy of the name; it is a false scale, which will always deceive those who try to use it. I appeal to the criticism of pure impersonal reason.

Miracle is a fact which takes place outside the laws of nature, by the intervention of forces superior to nature, and even of that force which, in creating nature, has determined its laws. Now reason cannot demonstrate that this force does not exist, and that it is neither intelligent nor free. If this force exists, reason cannot prove that it may not intervene in the web of human events, or in the succession of the phenomena of the universe, and communicate to created intelligences a knowledge of the future.

It is certain that at no time, in no school, and in no system, have such conclusions been proven. We have been waiting for this proof through centuries; it cannot be furnished, for it does not exist. Great intellects, in revolt against God, have sought it, and not finding it, are forced into systematic negation; but what they persistently deny in the name of system, we calmly affirm in the name of pure reason; for systems change, and pure reason changes not.

Scientific philosophy speaks of unchangeable laws, confounding regularity with immutability. If they are not unchangeable, we are told, all science becomes impossible, just because it is founded on those laws. This is mere sophistry. Science is founded on determinism; but the passing intervention of a superior being in a determinism ascertained by experience is no argument against regularity. This intervention is only a new element which leads back to a higher unity, involving in its immense circle nature, man, and the God who rules them.

The weakness of the thesis which seeks to establish the impossibility of miracle and prophecy is so evident, even for those who hold it, that, when pressed too closely by relentless logic, they at once revert to the non-existence of supernatural phenomena. They say that these do not exist, because they have never seen them, and in proof they assert that our scientific experience has never established them. But the scientific experience of a few philosophers and a few years can demonstrate nothing; even were it exact, it is valueless for those ages which are the witnesses of things now not seen. We are not witnesses of the beginnings of life in a world not yet alive; but this fact does not authorise us to contest that amazing phenomenon; we are not witnesses of the first appearance of man among non-speaking and non-thinking animals; our defective experience does not authorise us to deny the advent of the first human pair. We have never seen in any people, in any land, the rise of a being like Jesus; and yet Christ has lived and revealed himself.

To attempt to measure, by the experiment of a day or a century, even when the experience is that of academic precisians, unprejudiced and fair, phenomena which filled the space of time anterior to nature and man, seems either so ingenious or so daring that it is idle to answer such simplicity or presumption.

Our opponents have attempted to include under the denominations of legends, fables, and myths, miracles such as the Gospel documents record, as well as those which we may read in the sacred books of other religions, those of India, the Vedas, the Lalitavistara, the Lotos of the Good Law and others, those of China, the Kings, those of Mahomet, the Koran; but such a confusion is unjust and offensive, and must be cleared up by establishing an essential difference between miracle and the marvellous.

Miracle is a fact essentially conceivable, because in itself it implies no contradiction—there is a reason for its appearance and a moral end. The marvellous, on the contrary, is often absurd; when we seek for a cause which might have produced it, we find none, and, if we wish to discover the intent, it seems vain or immoral.

If we examine, one by one and in detail, the miraculous facts of which the life of Jesus is full, and compare them with those in the sacred books of Buddha or of Mahomet, or even with the stories in the Apocryphal Gospels, we shall see the difference between miracle which reason can and ought to accept, if it be certified by trustworthy witnesses, and the fantastic marvels which reason must inexorably repudiate, even were they attested by so-called witnesses. There can be no witness against supreme truth; whoever testifies against it is either deceived or a deceiver. There can be no hesitation; the shedding of blood could at most only prove the sincerity of a martyr's illusions. He must not be treated as a knave, but as a visionary and a fanatic.

The miracles of Jesus, reported in the Gospels, present one and all the same character of divine power, of truth, simplicity, harmony, and goodness. They have nothing so strange as those which legend has attributed to Buddha and Mahomet, nothing which looks like ostentation, or a design to astonish the crowd and inspire alarm. They are always stamped with gentleness and infinite pity; like him who wrought them, they reveal his power, linked with an unfailing tenderness. The cause which produced them is in the living God, concealed under the manhood of Jesus, and their end is the good of man. All have for their aim the enlightenment of man, they tend to touch his heart, to ameliorate his lot, to inspire trust and instil virtue; they are thus consecrated by the purest morality and most perfect sanctity.

The prodigies with which the legends of certain men have been overlaid do not make a real part of their history; they can be severed from it without harming the consistent chain of events. Mahomet's work can be explained, his struggles his precepts, his success, his ascendency over the Arabs, without prodigies; but Jesus is inexplicable without his miracles. They are an essential element in his mission: by them he gained the faith of his disciples and convinced them of his Messianic calling; by them he exercised a powerful influence on the people, and was able to affirm and demonstrate the truth of his teaching. Even after his death, in his continued life in the world, he remains essentially miraculous; his work is the greatest of prodigies. No philosophy of history can explain, without the constant intervention of the Spirit of God, that great and indestructible society, publishing to every creature a crucified God, protesting against all human passions and all vices, against tyrannic power and slavery, teaching salvation by faith in this crucified God, by humility and penitence, by love and self-sacrifice.

Such a doctrine and such virtues cannot be based upon nature or humanity, since these wage against them a constant merciless war. Beyond nature and humanity there is God alone, and we must recognise God revealed in Jesus as the immovable mainstay of faith, and of the sanctity of believers.

There is yet another striking and absolutely unique characteristic of the miracles of Jesus ; they are all symbolical and prophetical ; and according to the expression emphasized by the fourth Gospel, they deserve the name of signs. They interpret to the senses one of the invisible functions of the divine power of Jesus to save humanity and transform the conscience; they all prophesy what this divine power is to accomplish in the ages to come, both in the depths of the soul and in the open daylight of the Church.[1]

XI.

All the critics who have depended upon some particular theory implying the negation of miracle, have seen the necessity of getting rid of the miraculous facts contained in the Gospel records; and their method demands notice. As soon as they find themselves in presence of any prophecy it is declared to be an interpolation, added as an afterthought. The interpolator or forger has never been found, but none the less he is a certainty. Prophecy does not exist, and is impossible; but only for those who do not admit God, and they have never given convincing proof of their theory

The process of elimination as applied to miraculous facts is manifold. The mythical school born some fifty years ago, and already dead, declared all these facts to be the invention of early Christians, who had in their minds a conventional type of the expected Messianic hero, and a superior being, named Jesus, having persuaded them that he was this hero, all these traits were attributed to him. But the mythical school has given no certain and positive proof of this work of creative legend; nor has it explained by any certain evidence how Jesus the carpenter exercised, unless by a miracle, such an ascendency over his disciples, that he subdued them to be his apostles, and made them heroes of fidelity and virtue. The witness of the narrators who affirm and attest the truth of their accounts has never been refuted. The narrators must have lied when they glorified their Master, and history is only a cheat. I need not refute these exploded theories.

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[1] I must refer the reader to the body of this work to prove the view which I can here only indicate.

The older rationalistic school in Germany made use of a literary process to get rid of the Gospel miracle. The whole life of Jesus was really like our human lives ; wherein was nothing abnormal, nothing miraculous ; the most simple events were clothed with a miraculous character by the way in which the writers told them. They were poetical, and embellished ; they took an optical illusion for the reality ; the dead were only asleep ; the possessed of devils were only epileptic or maniacal ; ignorance, credulity, and Oriental imagination gave to the life of Jesus that legendary and supernatural aspect of which true scientific criticism must divest it. This method, which the Germans Semler and Paulus misused so wearisomely, has quickly succumbed to the derision of the mythical school itself.

These are the sole tools of anti-miraculous criticism, at the service of Pantheistic, Materialistic, or Atheistic systems, forged in Germany and imitated in France, where they have been rendered more keen and subtle, and used with a lighter and more dexterous hand ; but they have not succeeded in destroying the sure foundations of the history of Jesus.

We must take the history as it is, or deny it as a whole. To take away all in it that is transcendent and miraculous, is to destroy it, not in itself, for it defies destruction, but in the minds of those who try to purify it, as they say, from its supernatural element.

If the subject be a life of Jesus treated according to the rules of history, the necessary questions and the short answers of all impartial criticism, based on pure reason alone, are as follows: What are the documents wherein the facts of this life have been written?

The four Gospels.

Have these writings sprung from the immediate witnesses of the events, or from those who have had access to the immediate witnesses?

Yes.

Does their antiquity, and, therefore, their authenticity, appear certain and based on convincing proof?

Yes; and even unbelieving critics recognise this.

Are the recorded facts, even when abnormal and miraculous, conceivable, implying no contradiction, whether examined in detail, or judged as a whole?

They are conceivable, their harmony is indissoluble and of a perfect unity; they have as their cause the infinite power of God intervening by the humanity of Jesus, who is its mighty instrument; they have for their end the virtue, instruction, salvation, and sanctity of men, and the manifestation of the unspeakable mercy of God.

Can the witnesses of all these marvellous works be refuted?

No; their holy life and their martyrdom attest their sincerity; they prove not only that they believe what they affirm, but that what they affirm is real; for their affirmation has for its object palpable, external, sensible, and public facts about which there can be no mistake.

XII.

When criticism has accomplished its work, proved and chosen its materials, history may begin to build the edifice.

The essential elements of the life of Jesus are furnished by the Gospels. He who examines them impartially, by the light of criticism and free from all philosophic prepossession, anterior to all faith, a criticism which alone has the right to be called the criticism of pure and impersonal reason; that criticism, even when faith is absent, must accept them in their absolute integrity, without alteration or diminution, and without the loss of a single fact or word.

All in them is historical and real, and above all the miraculous facts, and the most transcendent because most mysterious words of Jesus. In this work they will be found in their entirety, harmonised and combined. Even if my faith had not rendered it a sacred duty to gather them together unreservedly, my reason alone as an impartial historian would have imposed it on me. Far from seeking to reduce the extraordinary events of this unique life and the doctrine intermingled with these events to the proportions of my own mind, I have endeavoured to raise myself to the height of the things which I relate, and to efface myself before the infinite Wisdom whose teachings I reproduce. Such a tone of mind is a guarantee of fidelity, for man is naturally inclined to substitute his own sentiments and ideas for those he endeavours to represent; if he mixes new things and old he will probably falsify the history of the past.

A historical work is above all things descriptive and pictorial; it ought to paint the facts exactly, to reproduce them in an animated and varied narrative, which makes them, as it were, present to the mind of the readers in despite of time.

and shows dead men living in despite of death. I do not believe that any book, in this respect, can be compared to the Gospels. The scenes which they describe, the pictures which they draw, are models of art; they possess simplicity and grandeur, sobriety and distinctness of detail. Without a thought of artistic rules, scarce known to them, careful only to narrate in language accurate but scarcely correct, the life of their Master, they, out of the fulness of their recollections, have left a perfect example of a descriptive history. I have reproduced their narrative with scrupulous fidelity, and in order to give it exactly I have respected even its incorrect expressions—so striking at times by their very roughness. I should have dishonoured it by adding to or subtracting from it. The Gospels are pictures by consummate masters; it is impossible to improve great works of art.

It will be said that there is no further need to write about Jesus; the Gospels, because perfect, are enough; no more should be attempted than to reduce them to harmony, and translate them into our modern languages. But history is not only a narration of facts; if it be first and above all a pictorial work, its duty is to frame the facts and replace them in their surroundings. Every event is subject to the laws of time and space; the mind can only conceive it by going back to the points of space and time at which it was done. The point in space is indicated by geography; the point of time by the general history of the nation and of mankind. The description of a fact is complete only so far as it is shown not only in itself, but in this double surrounding. It is often incomprehensible, and remains inexplicable, if we take it away from its setting.

When we write on contemporary events, for men of our own age, we assume that they know the geographical and historical scene of these events, and when we record facts we leave it to them to place them there; so did the evangelists when they wrote the life of their Master for the first Christians. Moreover, the mere fact was enough for them; it always contained some eternal element, superior to time and space, and in neglecting, perhaps deliberately, the conditions of time and place, they set the Son of God in the immensity of the ages and above the earth, and the person they described was great enough to answer to the needs of all the ages and of all the earth.

But we who have not, as they, seen Christ living, acting and speaking, we, who only see him as he is from all eternity, must be allowed to replace him in his earthly and human setting, in that land of Palestine which has kept the traces of his passage and been the witness of his life. We must be allowed to replace him in Jewish society, among his fellow-citizens, the crowd which pressed upon his steps, and in that Judaean world whose anger he incurred, whose stubbornness and blindness he experienced. I have considered this work not only legitimate, but indispensable, in order to understand the acts and life of Jesus, his sorrows, and the form of his teaching.

A fact is altered if taken away from its surroundings; perfect as a painting may be, it needs a fit and harmonious frame, that the scale of colour and tone be not falsified and that it gain in force. I have carefully endeavoured to frame the life of Jesus in what I will call his pictorial and geographical surroundings, and in his social and Jewish life. Two long journeys enabled me very closely to study Palestine, the land of Jesus; I have travelled through it slowly, in every direction, following the traces of the Master from Bethlehem and Hebron to the boundaries of Tyre and Sidon and the sources of Jordan. I stayed long in those very places where Jesus lived the longest, where he strove and suffered most ardently, taught the most, and loved the most. I have endeavoured to see the places as they were eighteen hundred years ago; their present desolation, their heaps of ruins, the buildings raised by the piety of Christians, have scarce left anything of their primitive state. I have examined ancient traditions, questioned the most experienced travellers, above all, studied the Gospels; indeed I may say that I lived them there, in the land wherein all their narrative was accomplished. Those who have assailed the reality of the history of Jesus cannot have seen Palestine; if they had studied it, the Gospel in hand, they would have understood that the Gospel was not invented.

No life presents a closer harmony with the land in which it was spent than that of Christ. Galilee, with the town of Nazareth, the Lake of Tiberias, Tabor with its hills and its green valleys, make a fitting frame for Jesus, living for thirty years unknown, for the apostle, the popular teacher, announcing the Gospel of the Kingdom, instructing the crowd in parables, leading them into the desert, and revealing in the mountain to the disciples his eternal glory. On the other hand, Judaea, austere and arid, with its rocky hills, Jerusalem with its valley of Cedron and gloomy tombs, harmonize well with the Prophet, misconstrued and rejected, condemned to an ignominious death. I seem to have gained, in contact with Palestine, with its ruins and the sacred memories of which it is full, a profound feeling of the Gospel facts and their truth, their reality, and their beauty. The facts are inseparable from the land. It may become sadder yet, more desolate and more dead; it always frames them in its light, in its valleys and undulating hills, in the roads where Jesus passed, and where endless generations still pass and repass after him.

To reconstitute the social surroundings wherein Jesus lived is more difficult than to describe the places predestined for his action, and is perhaps the most complex and difficult work of history. We can attempt the portrait of a man, but not that of an age, a time, a civilisation, at a definite point in its existence ; yet it is impossible to understand a man, above all a public man, if we do not study him in the society to which he belonged. Now, a society is made up of a thousand elements, which, in spite of all efforts, and with the most varied and exact information, it is impossible to reproduce in their complexity, their shifting character and their activity ; and all that the sincere historian can attempt is to describe the religious and political organization of a people, to enumerate and explain the parties which moved within its organization, to point out its philosophical doctrines and creeds, its prejudices, way of life, morals, and traditional customs, its national and political passions. However imperfect this restoration may be, it throws much light upon the life of a man. Many words of Jesus, many facts in his life, explain themselves, without comment, so soon as they are placed in their true surroundings.

When the historian has replaced the facts of a human life in their natural frame, he has only gained the power of describing them ; it is then no less necessary a task to group them in their chronological order. History is the record of events in their proper sequence, the unity of a life is not conceivable without this interdependence. One of the difficult problems of the life of Jesus is to determine exactly the succession of facts which the documents relate for us, and which constitute his public life. The indications of time given by the third and fourth Gospels, and by some secular historians, illuminated moreover by astronomy and numismatics attentively studied and compared, enable us to arrive at a definite result. The reader will find in the first Appendix, under the title of "General Chronology of the Life of Jesus," the reasons which have enabled me to fix the birth of Jesus between the years 747-749, the year 27-28 as the date of his baptism, the year 28-29 as that of his Galilaean ministry, and the year 30 for his death. I am aware of the numerous divergences which, on these points, divide the chronologists and the historians of Jesus; but I believe that these divergences, which do not exceed seven years, for the extreme time of his birth and his death, reduced to one year for the duration of his public life, are of little importance when the substance of the history is considered. In every case they authorise the writer to take some liberty, if he show reason for the conclusion he adopts.

Some authors are of opinion that the public life lasted seven years. If such an opinion be accepted, it must rely on the Gospel documents and not on later authorities. Now, it may be discussed, whether according to the Gospels there were three Passovers or four in the ministry of Jesus; but we cannot discover one more or less. Whatever system we adopt, the entire life of Jesus was transacted between two fixed and incontestable dates; he was born before the death of Herod, which took place in the spring of the year 750 or 751, and he certainly died before Pilate quitted Judaea, that is to say, before the year 36 of the common era.

When once the facts of a life have been described and classed according to an accurate chronology, the historian has only one duty remaining, but it is the most arduous and the most delicate of all; that of explaining them, of showing their nature, importance and connection, their interdependence, causes, and consequences, without however altering, minimising or disfiguring them. I have attempted this work, with infinite humility, in regard to a life like that of Jesus. Every one of his words and acts has seemed to me like a diamond or a precious pearl; I have been content to imitate the art of the jeweller in sorting the stones, cut by a divine hand, and in mounting them I have only endeavoured to give them more relief and greater brightness.

To comprehend the acts of Christ and his doctrine, the auxiliary sciences of history, psychology, ethics, philosophy, theodicy, sociology, anthropology, are not enough; Jesus exceeds them all; no one can wholly contain him. His life, at every moment, routs what we are pleased to call our psychology, ethics, philosophy, sociology and anthropology, as well as our feeble and timid theodicy. Therefore, when I appeal to these sciences, so far as I am conversant with them, I have never hesitated to lift them up to Jesus, and have never attempted to confine him by them; when he is greater than they, he does not destroy, but gives clearness to them. The greatest monument raised by theology to the glory of Jesus is St. Thomas Aquinas'[1] treatise on the Incarnation. No intellect has ever explained in a more powerful synthesis, with stronger reasoning, and more exact psychology, the mystery of Christ. Every life of Jesus should contain the whole of it, in order to be in the full light of his doctrine. I owe to this master all that is good in my attempt to reach what may be called the Christian philosophy of this history.

XIII.

In beginning this work, I have not concealed from myself either its greatness or its difficulty; I have felt them growing as my task proceeded, and now that I see it ended I am conscious of its incompleteness and inadequacy; yet I have spared no effort to render it less unworthy of him whose history I have told. One profound conviction has sustained me: Christ, living and acting by his Spirit in the Church, is the salvation of men and of nations to day. To rally round him the consciences of a country, an age, or even only to attempt this, is to render great service to that age and country.

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[1] Summa theolog. 3 Pars.

Modern civilisation, with its ardent aspirations for righteousness, for the freedom and the well-being of even the least, for charity and peace is born of Jesus. He who has given life can alone preserve it, subdue selfishness, curb violence, and bring under subjection the wild passions which devour us. He accomplishes these marvels in the inner conscience; it is our business to let him accomplish it in our land. The strife which tears us asunder is nothing but the deadly strife between old persistent paganism and the new reign of the Gospel. I have desired to work as an apostle for the new kingdom of God, the spiritual kingdom of the Church, of the man who is free from all human service and the most terrible bondage of all, since it begets all, that of evil, ignorance and vice. As Jesus appealed to the conscience more than to science, and since he spoke to all, this book, which attempts to call him up before the age, is addressed to the conscience of my contemporaries, without, however, disdaining science.

A lively prejudice of the present day declares that the divorce is complete and irremediable between science and faith. I have combated this prejudice all my life with a conviction which experience has only confirmed; I will assail it to my latest breath, and I will never cease to harmonize my eternal faith and my modern culture. Neither in politics nor history, in natural science nor philosophy, has ever one fact been ascertained to demonstration, or one law which contradicts the word of Jesus, as the Church guards it, immovable and incorruptible. The trial has lasted through long ages, and, because it is triumphant, the race of men who keep their faith, I do not say in a pure conscience, but in an independent and manly reason, eager for all new truth, and inflexible against the prejudice of the moment, whether opinion is in their favour or not, lasts, and will last, for ever.

I know that between the Christ of faith and cultivated minds of our time there have been many misunderstandings; perhaps this work may scatter some of them. Written in solitude and silence, far from all which sets men asunder, the fruit of the long and persevering work, I may say, of my whole life, it has been no work agitated by polemics, but a quiet work of history and faith. It has seemed to me, as I wrote the life of our Master, that his loveliness, his sweetness, his wisdom, his saintliness, his love, his divinity, shining through all his acts and sorrows, would defend him better than our weak arguments and our empty angers. I trust that something of him, a breath of his soul and spirit, may have passed into these pages. I would hand on to all what he has given to me.

In spite of all, Jesus remains the great figure in the heaven of all Christian people. Righteousness, glowing with charity such as he would have it, has become the sovereign law of the world, impressed on every conscience; and even those who have lost faith in Christ preserve his morality, forgetting that it comes from him. The power of self-sacrifice, the lever which Jesus placed in the hands of his disciples, is permanent; true believers are always ready to give their life, if mankind, in the least of its children, can be freed from evil, ignorance, sorrow, and death.

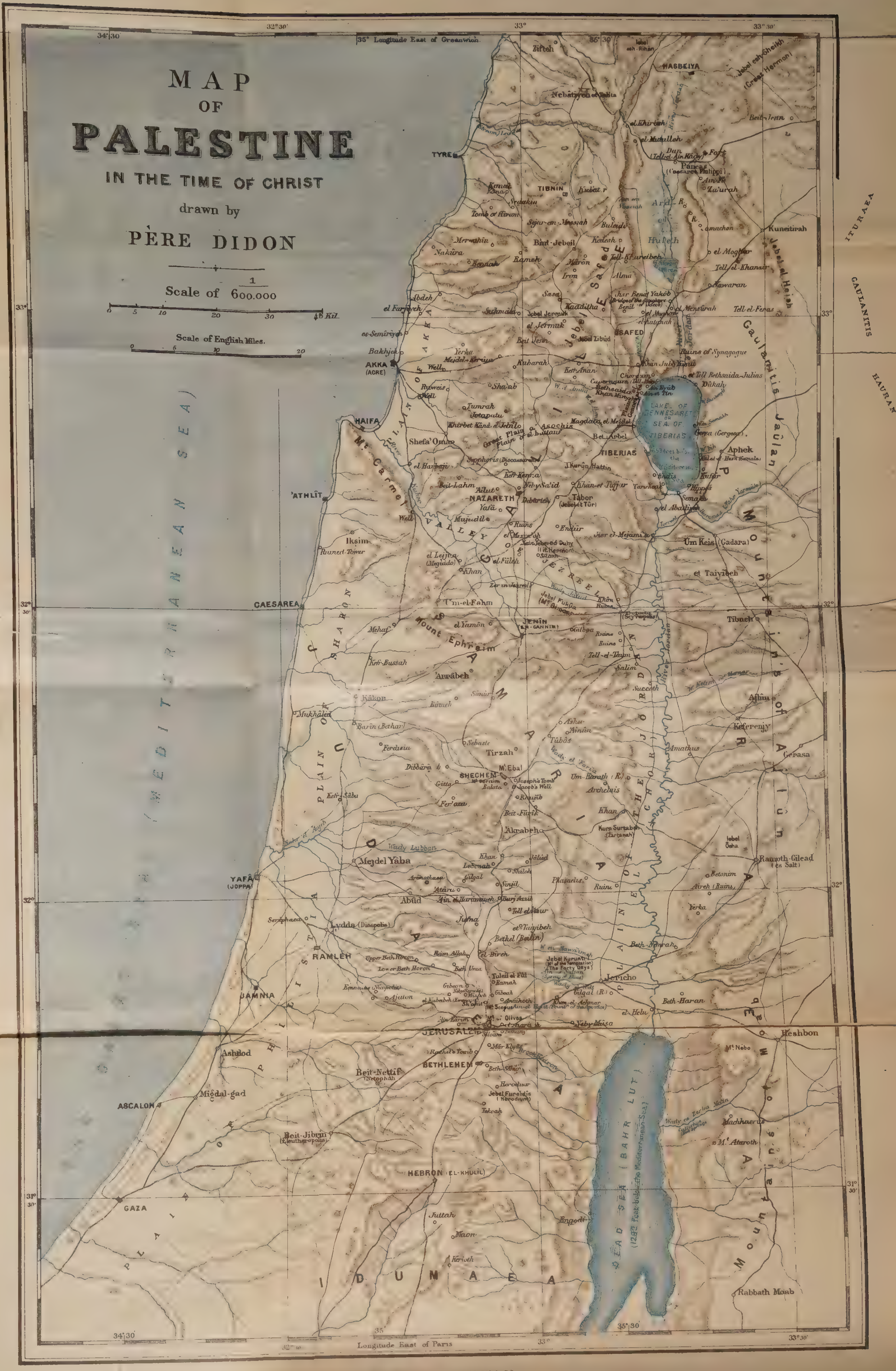
To Christ, as the Church knows him, I would turn the eyes of this generation. It is sick: he will heal it; old and worn: he will restore its youth and its great dreams; for his disciples are men of eternal hope. It is accused of being positive, of believing only in what it can see, use, and enjoy: he will teach it to see the invisible, to taste the immaterial, to understand that the most useful man to himself and to others, to his country and to mankind, is he who can sacrifice himself, and that of all good things the one most pleasing to a refined taste is self-sacrifice. It is said to be greedy of pleasure and gold; perhaps there is the cause of its decadence, for pleasure kills, and gold may lead to every vice. Christ will teach it to despise pleasure and to employ those riches well, which abound in proportion as the earth is wisely subdued.

In every case the world is a prey to a thousand sorrows, desires, and needs; those who proclaim the joy of life know well that the joy is not unmingled with pain, and that death is all the more cruel because it breaks a happy life. Christ alone teaches the joy of suffering, because he alone pours into the soul a divine life which no sorrow destroys, which trial strengthens, and he alone teaches us to despise death, because we can look at it with hope.

If I might venture to borrow the words of the greatest evangelist, I would say: "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God." That is the faith of the Church; which I confess in the fulness of my reason and my liberty. To her infallible judgment I commit this book approving what she approves, rejecting what she rejects, remembering the words of Jesus: "Who heareth you heareth me; who despiseth you, despiseth me."

BOOK I.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS.


ITURAEA
GAULANITIS
HAURAN
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
35° Longitude East of Greenwich
Longitude East of Paris
34°30'
32°30'
33°
33°30'
35°30'
32°
31°30'
Jebel esh-Sheikh (Great Hermon)
HASBEIYA
Zifteh
Nebatiyeh el-Foka
Beit-Jenn
el Khirbeh
el Mutulleh
Dan (Tell el-Kadi)
Paneas (Caesarea Philippi)
Ain Fit
Za'urah
TYRE
TIBNIN
Kubat r
Hasbany
Ard el Huleh
Kunetirah
Jebel el Heish
Kenah
Sidakin
Tomb of Hiram
Sejur-en-Nessah
Buleida
Bint-Jebeil
Kedesh
Merwahin
Nakura
Ramieh
Meron
Irom
Alma
Tell el Khuraibeh
el Mogher
Tell el-Khanasir
Nawaran
Jebel Safed
Sasa
Kadditha
Jisr Benat Yakob (Bridge of the daughters of Jacob)
Mensurah
Tell el-Feras
el Faruch
Abdeh
Sutmaid
Jebel Jermuk
el Jermuk
SAFED
es-Semiriyeh
Beit Jenn
Jebel Zibud
Ruins of Synagogue
Gaulanitis
Jaûlan
Bakhjeh
AKKA (ACRE)
Yerka
Mejdel-Kerum
Kubarah
Khan Jubb Yusuf
Tell Bethsaida-Julias
Dukah
Well
Beth-Anan
Chorazin
Capernaum (Tell-Hum)
Bethsaida
Khan Minyeh
Ain Tin
Plain of Akka
Ruweis
Sha'ab
LAKE OF GENNESARETH OR SEA OF TIBERIAS
HAIFA
Jumrah
Jotapata
Khirbet Kana
el Jebil
Great Plain
Plain of el buttauf
Asochis
Magdala
el Mejdel
Gersa (Gergesa)
Aphek
Shefa' Omar
Bet Arbel
TIBERIAS
Mt. Carmel
Sepphoris (Diocaesarea)
Kefr Kenna
J. Kurun Hattin
Kulat el Husn (Gamala)
el Harbaj
Beit-Lahm
Ailut
Neby Sa'id
Khan et Tujjar
Kersa
Kefr Harib
Hippos
'ATHLIT
NAZARETH
Debarieh
Tabor (Jebel et Tur)
Semakh
Yafa
Mujeidil
el Abadiyeh
Well
Valley
Ruins
Endur
Jisr el-Mejami
Iksim
Ruined Tower
el Mezra'ah
Nain
Jebel ed Duhy (Little Hermon)
Solam
Um Keis (Gadara)
el Lejjun (Megiddo)
el Fuleh
Khan
Jezreel
et Taiyibeh
Zer'in (Jezreel)
Wady Jalud
Khan
Ruins
CAESAREA
Um-el-Fahm
Jebel Fukua (Mt. Gilboa)
Beisan (Scythopolis)
Tibneh
Mount Ephraim
el Yamon
JENIN (EN-GANNIM)
Gilboa
Mehaf
Ruins
Ruins
Tell-el-Tiaum
Kefr-Bussah
Arrabeh
Salim
Sanur
Succoth
Sharon
Kakon
Rameh
Ajlun
Mukhalid
Barin (Bathar)
Asher
Ainun
Tubas
Keferenjy
Sebaste
Mountains of Ajlûn
Ferdisiu
Tirzah
Wady el Fara
Amathus
Gerasa
Dibbarah
SHECHEM
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Gerizim
Joseph's Tomb
Jacob's Well
Balata
Um-Barath (R.)
Gitta
Archelais
Kefr Saba
Fer'ata
Rujib
Beit-Furik
Khan
Kurn Surtabeh (Tartanah)
Akrabeh
Jebel Osha
Nahr el Aujeh
Wady Lubban
Ramoth Gilead (es Salt)
Mejdel Yaba
Khan
Lebonah
Jiljiliah
Shiloh
Betonim
YAFA (JOPPA)
Aronathaea
Jiljal
Sinjil
Phasaelis
Ruins
'Ataru
Ain el Haramiyeh
Burj Bardawil
Aireh (Ruins)
Abud
Tell Asur
Yerka
Jufna
et Taiyibeh
Serephaea
Lydda (Diospolis)
Bethel (Beitin)
RAMLEH
Upper Beth Horon
Lower Beth Horon
Ramallah
el-Bireh
Beth Nimrah
Beit Unia
Jebel Kuruntul (Mt. of the Temptation) (The Forty Days)
Ain es Sultan
Emmaus (Nicopolis)
Ajalon
Gibeon
Neby Samwil
Mizpeh
Tuleil el Ful
Ramah
Gibeah
Anathoth
Jericho
Gilgal (R.)
JAMNIA
el Kubeibeh (Emmaus?)
Shafat
Mt. Scopus
Ain el Hod
Khan el Ahmar
Beth-Haran
Ain Karim
Mt. Olives
Bethany
el Helu
Siloam
Neby Musa
JERUSALEM
Heshbon
Ashdod
Rachel's Tomb
Mar Elyas
Mt. Nebo
BETHLEHEM
Brook Kidron
Beit-Nettif
Netophah
Beth-Sahur
Herodium
Jebel Fureidis (Herodium)
Migdal-gad
ASCALON
Tekoah
Wady Zerka Main
Machaerus
Callirrhoe
Beit-Jibrin (Eleutheropolis)
Mt. Ataroth
HEBRON (EL-KHULIL)
DEAD SEA (BAHR LUT) (1292 Feet below the Mediterranean Sea)
GAZA
Juttah
Engedi
Maon
Kerioth
Rabbath Moab
PHILISTIA
SAMARIA
GALILEE
JUDAEA
PERAEA
IDUMAEA
PLAIN OF PHILISTIA
PLAIN OF SHARON
Mountains of Moab
Plain of the Jordan
Plain of Esdraelon
El Ghor
River Jordan
Jordan
Kishon River
Wady Yarmuk

MAP
OF
PALESTINE
IN THE TIME OF CHRIST

drawn by

PÈRE DIDON

Scale of $\frac{1}{600.000}$

0 5 10 20 30 40 Kil.

Scale of English Miles.

0 5 10 20

NEW YORK, D. APPLETON & Co.

CHAPTER I.

THE TIME.

THE life of Christ forms not only the last scene in a national drama occupying a space of nearly twenty centuries, from the time of Abraham to the destruction of the Jewish people, it fills universal history, of which it is the centre and the pinnacle. In Jesus all things end, and in him everything begins. After two thousand years his personality remains the most living and necessary, the most spoken against and the most unconquerable.

Before relating the story of his life, we must examine the state of mankind, when he who loved to call himself the "Son of Man" was born.

Every age contains a certain number of general facts which characterise it and sum up its complex life. Just as it would be impossible to judge of modern times without taking account of democracy and socialism in the social order; of the influence of armies and assemblies in the political order; of experimental science in the intellectual order; of Christianity and unbelief in the religious order; so, when we study the age of the Messiah, it is impossible not to take account of four grand facts: Roman policy, Paganism, Greek philosophy, and Judaism. They dominate and contain all; mixed together, they act on each other, each in its own fashion stirred consciences and nations, and their providential action is the only explanation of the movement which, from the beginning, bore mankind towards its destined goal.

The Roman Empire was the assemblage under one sceptre of almost all the peoples of Europe, Asia, and Africa, the greatest conquering and organizing political power which the world has ever seen.

Greece and Italy, the islands and shores of the Mediterranean, Asia Minor and the centre of Asia, Syria, and Phoenicia, Egypt and Western Africa, Spain and Gaul, Germany from the Danube to the Rhine, were all conquered by Rome. Her legions, generals, and governors covered the earth. Her military roads started from the Forum and spread northwards to Scotland, westward to Lusitania and the ocean, southward to the Thebais, eastward to the desert of Arabia. The authority of the Roman people was over all, with its law, its language and customs. The rest of the world, Northern Germany, Armenia, the kingdom of Parthia, India and China, Arabia and Ethiopia, were the frontiers of this colossal empire.

Augustus was on the throne, holding in his hand all power and authority, he was Tribune, Prefect and High Priest, in one word, Imperator. He bore a name reserved for the gods alone; he sent his surveyors to measure the world, census-takers to catalogue his riches and to number his subjects. He constructed roads, built aqueducts, temples, and towns, and gave his people bread, games, and festivals, even to satiety.

After having everywhere brought ruin and devastation, the beast of the prophet Daniel lay down to rest. Round him the nations which had not obeyed him were for a moment quiet; the universe seemed to sleep under the wing of the Roman eagle; peace was universal. A great historian was recounting the glory of the most powerful among the nations, two great poets were celebrating it, one in immortal odes, the other in the most musical of epics. The temple of Janus was closed; for twelve years the god of war had not issued from it.

In this hour of silence, when the sword slept, he was born to whom the prophets gave the names of "Father of a new time," "Prince of Peace."[1] It was a great date in human history; never had political power realised so vast a work; the material and administrative unity, the fusion of almost all nations in the known world was a giant's task. The art was great indeed which could subdue and annex, colonise and assimilate, temporise and dare, organise conquest, and remain tolerant, each in order the better to rule. When Rome could not make a province out of a conquered state, she imposed upon it a sort of vassalage; in default of governors, she was content with native kings wisely chosen, and these kings only reigned by her favour, to be in her hand instruments of servitude, "*ut haberet instrumenta servitutis et reges*," as Tacitus says. Moreover, she always exacted tribute; and the sovereigns, to whom she allowed any power only kept the semblance of independence on condition that they bought it with the weight of gold and many presents. Herod the Idumaean, among others, the petty King of Judaea, knew how great was the Roman greed and how to satisfy it.

What Rome could not suppress, she accepted, but modified. If she did not feel herself strong enough to proscribe a religion among her subjects, as Druidism among the Gauls, she romanised the gods and raised to them altars with Gallo-Roman names. Belenus became Belenus-Apollo; Camulus, Mars-Camulus; Arduine, Diana-Arduine; and if she determined to put down and absolutely prohibit human sacrifices, she said to those whom she did not wish to irritate: "At this price you may become Roman citizens."

Thanks to this politic and patient temper, at the end of seven centuries she had succeeded in building up a prosperous magnificence before which everything paled ; even the empire of Alexander, the monarchies of the East, Egypt and the Pharaohs. Such a task may impress the mind by its results ; it disturbs and revolts the conscience by its methods. In the development of mankind it answers to that need of unity which is one of the sovereign laws of every living creature, because without it nothing in mankind or nature can live and increase. For many ages, drawn far away from their common cradle, races and nations were seeking and calling to each other ; from this time they were more nearly united, even if they were enslaved under a power which carried centralisation to excess. Slavery is detestable, as are conquests and violence, for it displays the selfishness and ferocity of the human animal ; but unity is divine, for it answers to the intention of Providence. That unity which Rome realised after seven centuries of strife became the condition of a still higher unity, that of the Kingdom of God. Military roads would henceforward become the ways of the apostles, those swordless conquerors to whom Jesus would say, "Go, teach all nations."[1] Roman law was to bend before the law of the Gospel, and a peace which was only the exhaustion of tyranny was to be succeeded by the peace which is the calm of a liberty obedient to God.

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[1] Isaiah ix. 6.

Such is the world's way. Man works unconsciously for the eternal purposes ; whether he obeys his better genius or allows himself to be led astray by his most violent and evil instincts, he remains the instrument of God, and he carries out, unwitting, the plans of which Providence keeps the secret, and of which the wonderful order and beauty, no less than the profound wisdom, can be seen only long after their execution.

Over and above the political facts were the religious facts. Politics relate to that force which binds together the nations materially and from outside; religion is the power which holds them in a spiritual chain and by conscience. The barbarians in their forests; great nations like the Hindoos and Chinese, behind their mountains; the Parthians and Arabs, in their vast desert plains; the Ethiopians under their torrid sky, submitted at last to one; but there was no race, no country, no state, except the Jewish, unaffected by it in religious matters. Egyptians and Syrians, Phoenicians and Carthaginians, Armenians and Parthians, Greeks and Romans, Germans and Celts, civilised men and savages, Aryans, Semites, and Turanians, all, without exception, were carried as by a torrent to the same religious aberrations which the Christian conscience, four centuries later, brought under the one opprobrious name of Paganism.

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[1] Matt. xxviii. 19.

In spite of the apparent diversity of theogonies and cosmogonies, mythologies and legends, symbols and rites, hierarchies and sacerdotal castes, the pagan worships reveal to the observer a common essence which justifies a common appellation. The same confused, unreflecting sentiment of the divine, the same basis of truths half concealed, innate or hereditary: the unity of God, immortality and future life, the law and need of bloody sacrifice, connect them with the eternal religion; but everywhere the same absurdities corrupt the divine sense, and everywhere the same errors disfigure religious truth.

All, carried away by a more or less conscious pantheism, identify God with Nature, and confound both in one and the same substance, in that they deify nature and materialise God. All misunderstand the transcendent unity of God, and, blinded by anthropomorphism, they personify the divine attributes as forces of the universe. All are weighed down by the same unchangeable fatalism; they forget the moral law, and place their safety less in the fulfilment of duty than in mysterious rites, strange, indecent, and cruel. All alike imagine a vague and gloomy immortality, of transmigrations and metempsychosis, with final absorption into the bosom of nature, a stepmother greedy to create and destroy; all raise man to the divine by apotheosis; all sanction the principles of caste and slavery, homicide and depravity. It is impossible to conceive a more radical perversion of the very essence of religion; the part of religion in conscience and humanity is to reveal God, to unite man to God, to release him from the yoke of passions and terrestrial forces which bring him under servitude and materialise him, to lay upon him his duty as the very law of God, to sustain him in his strife against evil, to comfort him in sorrow, to refresh him by hope and faith in eternal justice, and, because he is sinful, to teach him the meaning of repentance and expiation, and, in that he must die, to keep him calm in the face of immortality, by teaching him how to subdue death and die in God.

Now all Paganism, from the gross fetishism of savages to the learned religions of Egypt, the graceful mythologies of Greece, and the rites so firmly organized by imperial Rome, is only one long outrage on this divine mission; instead of revealing God it obscures him, changes him, and degrades his idea. This inexpressible, transcendent power, above all types and representations, this power, which alone could reveal itself without thereby suffering diminution, mankind, carried away by an unbridled imagination, has represented under many forms. Fevered by a sort of sensual drunkenness, it identified it with nature, decomposed it into a thousand personalities, incarnated it in matter, made it man, male and female, giving to it strange symbols, at once fantastic, grotesque, and cynical, borrowed from heaven and earth, from the vegetable and animal world, and even from our passions and our vices. Nor was there any ground for shrinking from this coarse realism; if the universe be God, then is it divine and sacred. Instead of lifting the soul towards God, Paganism brought it under the yoke of nature, made it adore what it ought to subdue, and misunderstand what it ought to adore. It destroyed man's relations with the divine, and defiled, in so doing, the only source from which man can for ever draw truth and justice, power and hope, consolation and life.

Conscience has nothing to hope from the foolish worship of this universe and the divinities which filled it. Whatever name it invokes is always that great unconscious Nature which presses from every side, under the weight of its energies, all that does not learn to subdue it. Purifying waters were no good, nor the bloody sprinklings after the sacrifices of bulls and goats, the hecatombs and blood of bulls for the Great Goddess, and the goats of Attis. Initiation into the mysteries nought availed, whatever their name or their intention; neither those of the Cabiri, of Bacchus and Ceres, of Osiris and Mithras, at Philae, at Eleusis, at Samothrace, Lesbos, Crete or Rome. When the initiated returned from these secret ceremonies, when, led by the priest, their head bound by a coronet of myrtle, and purified by bestial expiation, they had put on the Bacchic fawn-skin; when they had gazed behind the veil of the temples and the mythologies; they had seen and felt nothing throughout those luminous nights. They had read priestly riddles, they had looked into the sacred coffer, they knew that the gods were only nature and her forces, and that human destiny also was only that infinite and impersonal nature in whose bosom man had nothing to hope for but absorption or eternal migrations. No tendency towards good could be the issue of those preparatory fasts ending in orgies, from those sacred dances which always aimed at the cynical representation, and at the glorification of the male and female principles of living nature, or else at the practices of sensual magic which declared that it appropriated the very forces of creation, and, as in our own time among Mussulmans and Buddhists, confounded the nervous excitement of epilepsy with divine ecstasy

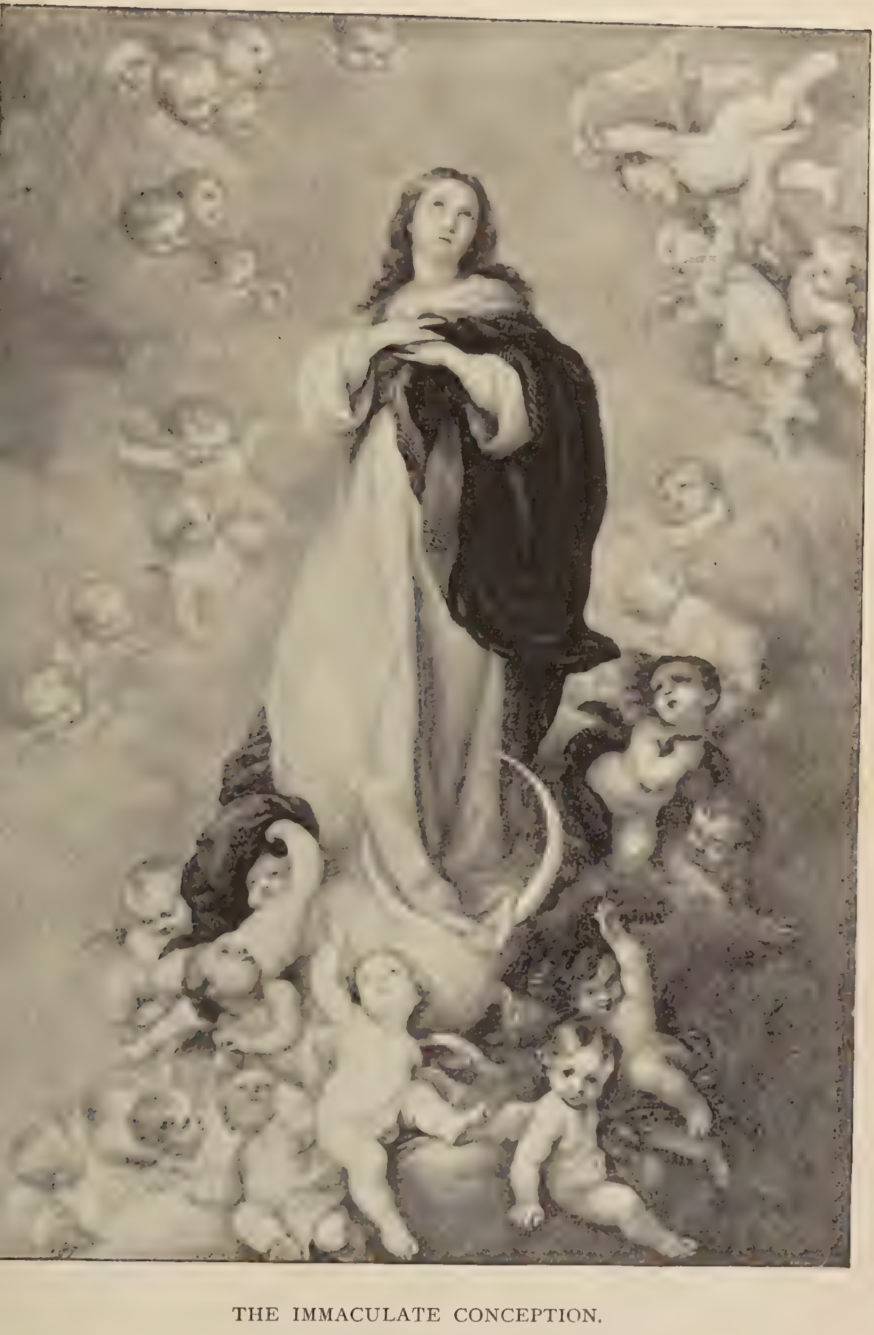
All the trinities, of India and Assyria, of .Egypt and Phoenicia, of Greece and Rome; Brahma, Vishnu and Siva;

Ahura-Mazda, Mithra, and Çrraoska; Atum, Ra, and Kheper; Ammon, Bel, and Ao; Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto; all those divine couples, Brahma and Maya, Kem and Mout, Baal and Astarte, Baal-Ammon and Tanith, Isis and Osiris, Moloch and Mylitta, Dionysos and Aphrodite, Cupid and Psychè; all the genii, demons and heroes; all the Orphic mysteries, those of Bacchus and Ceres, Isis and Mithra, the Thesmophoria of Athens, the orgies of Samothrace, the Eleusinian and Bacchanalian mysteries; all these divinities and hierarchies were just the same: we find the same fancy in their theogonic and cosmogonic speculations, the same cruelty and the same corruption in their rites.

A strange heaven weighed upon the race of men, pouring down floods of darkness and death; and mankind, timid and mad, eagerly worshipped it. No cry of revolt arose from that ignorant mass in their oppression and degradation; slavery and vice were its pleasures; gods were multiplied without end; rites, like so many weighty chains, strangled souls, and men embraced their fetters. These religions bade men die and kill their children, and were obeyed; bade women sacrifice their chastity, and the sacrifice was made.

Poets sung of gods and recited their fabulous epics; philosophers sought for a sense hidden under the myths, and made a pact with revolting worships; politics forged an instrument of government out of polytheism and its apotheosis, while the vicious crowd acquiesced. Led astray by the priests, the people rushed to festivals, consulted the oracles, crouched before idols, and lashed on by their instincts, now terrified and now excited by the gods, rushed panting to their death.

For thirty centuries paganism had reigned over the human race, and the terrible yoke evermore grew heavier. It was as burdensome under Augustus, the high priest, at Rome, as



THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

From the Painting by Murillo, in the Louvre.

under the Pharaohs of Egypt and the kings of Assyria; its deadly character only grew worse with time.

Pantheism grew more refined; the number of deities endlessly increased. Rome, latest comer among pagan nations, surpassed the others in the fecundity with which she peopled her Pantheon; she counted her gods by thousands. The symbols were veiled in the recesses of the temples, and reserved for the initiated; but they were still obscene. Mythologies continued to inspire the genius of sculptors and poets; the gods grouped themselves round Jupiter as their sovereign. In seeking for unity in this ever-increasing crowd of divinities, philosophers could only find it in Fate, which, like the symbolical serpent, embraced in an inflexible circle all nature, man, the universe, and the gods.

Superstition increased, astrologers interpreted the future, and the seers of Chaldaea and the East took possession of Rome. The priests became a dominant caste, of which the deified emperor was the chief. The Saturnalia and Bacchanalia grew more and more indecent; the very security of the state demanded that they should be abolished; if the cruelty of the rites seemed to yield to gentler manners, if human blood ran in floods less abundant, corruption, on the other hand, became worse. It is a sad history of a tide oscillating between the two accursed shores, murder and lust, tossing about the whole human race at the pleasure of Melkart and Mylitta.

Yet, such is the tendency of the human soul towards truth and right, that even in this deluge some truths and virtues rose to the surface. Religious feeling, however warped, still existed; in the idea of God, though disfigured and travestied, remained some rays of glory; conscience could not be separated from thought, nor escape from the action of that mysterious, ever-present force, in whose bosom the whole universe is born, at once the terror and attraction of every creature. The moral law resisted in certain points all attack;

the sanctity of oaths, justice, humanity, was the of rule many wills and the honour of many lives. In this widespread perdition God preserved his elect; he had his chosen children who waited on him; sincere souls and wounded hearts, who called on the Unknown God. Evil is only an accident; it cannot destroy the essential part; now the essential part of human nature, always and everywhere, is to hunger after God.

But these elect are like pearls on a dung-heap: God alone knew them. The divine eye of Jesus saw from afar his future elect, these heathen of good faith of whom he thought in those profound words, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down as guests at the same table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; while the sons of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness, far from the light and the feast."[1]

What then is the place of paganism in the history of mankind? Political power, concentrated in Rome, had effected the material unity of nations, but it is not so clear that the religious force, expressed in a disorderly way in the polytheistic and idolatrous worships, produced anything; it is not so clear whether it were a movement forward or backward, a progress or a decline.

An arbitrary and preconceived science of the history of religions has wished to see in it a regular phase, holding the mean between fetishism and monotheism: fetishism, which according to its theory, is the starting-point, and monotheism, which is the goal of religious evolution. I do not think that it is possible to distinguish, from a religious standpoint, between fetishism or animism, and the polytheistic worships; at bottom they all have the same character, since all adore and deify nature. Fetishism is not a religion, but one of the constant and essential elements of the pagan religions: every pagan, Greek and Roman, as well as the negro of Timbuctoo, has his fetishes. The Palladium of Troy; the thirty square stones, which, in the time of Pausanias, surrounded the statue of Hermes, and were adored by the people, who gave to each the name of a god; the spear of Mars at Rome; and all the amulets among all the nations infected by the venom of Paganism, even when monotheistic, were only visible and wonder-working objects in which was a god or a divine being, or in which they were incarnate.

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[1] Matt. viii. 12, and parallel passages.

Mankind does not develop in the same manner as unintelligent nature, according to the law of continuity and under the impulse of God, whom it always obeys; it has its aberrations and its crises, inseparable from freedom. If paganism were a law of our specific evolution, it would also be a law of our individual evolution, for the individual, in his development, reproduces the laws of the species; and therefore, after the example of mankind, man would pass through fetishism and paganism; every individual would begin by having his manitou, and would then rise to the phase wherein nature is deified and gods are multiplied; but experience shows how false is such a conclusion.

Paganism is not a normal stage of humanity, but a malady, a mortal crisis, a vice of youth, a contagion which, through long ages, has infected the whole race, except only the little Semitic tribe of Abraham. All nations attacked by it have perished; all the forms in which it clothed itself are exhausted; the past of humanity is only an immense necropolis in which Paganism has buried the nations and is now itself buried, with its victims and its troop of false gods. Grave questions, as mysterious in the individual as in mankind at large, present themselves to us. Why has man been thus intoxicated with nature? Why has his imagination usurped the place of the rights of reason and primitive revelation? Why, instead of discerning the infinite Being, has he misunderstood him? Why has he been a slave when he should have been master, and revolted against what he should adore? Why has evil prevailed?

Whatever solution we give of these questions, one fact is clear; the world in the grasp of paganism was sick unto death; he who could heal it by restoring it to monotheism and the life-giving idea of God, and give it sway over nature and self, he and he alone, was its true saviour. Jesus has freed it, and thereby has conquered for himself a place without peer among the greatest men. Nothing human could break the doom which kept humanity captive and degraded, "a people walking in darkness," sinking and losing itself. Let those who doubt the fact look onward only two centuries; the idols were broken, the temples decayed, faith in the gods was dead, poets and philosophers, politicians and priests, were in league together, and these sages could do but little to avert the victory of Christ. They had hardly a word of blame for these degrading worships, scarce a protest against that mythological fury which hid the face of God by its multiplied symbols; desperately pagan in their syncretic philosophy, their Pythagoreanism, their Platonism, their Euhemerism, they endeavoured to seek the hidden meaning of legends and symbols, and, crouching under their old pantheism, their old fatalism, their old materialism, and their idle magic, they set themselves in vain against the Light which shone, in spite of them, to enlighten and save lost humanity.

Beyond the political and religious forces is that of reason. The first, in the social and practical order, tends towards civilisation and the material union of men: the second, resting on the sentiment of the divine and on tradition, seeks to unite man with God; the third, in the inward and personal order, is only the effort of an intelligent and free being to explain the principle of things and regulate life; it has its expression in science and philosophy. Every nation, race and civilisation, when arrived at a certain degree of development, have a philosophy, a policy, and a hierarchical religion.

At the time that Rome was the mistress of the world, and

Paganism bore rule over mankind, Greek philosophy had the sole authority. In the vast evolution of man, every nation has received from God a special destiny answering to its genius. The East is the warm and sunny cradle of religion; Rome was eminently practical in the knowledge of law and government, policy and action. Artistic and enquiring Greece had a genius for form, beauty, and philosophy: thus, all worship comes from the East, as the science of law from Rome, and philosophy from Greece.

Philosophy, which in human life, the movement of opinions and the direction of minds, plays so large a part, took its birth in the Hellenic world six or seven centuries before Jesus Christ, on the shores and islands of the Mediterranean, at Miletus, Smyrna, Ephesus, Lampsacus, Clazomenae, Scyros, Apollonia, Samos, Agrigentum, Elea, Abdera, Athens, Cyrene, Stagira, Elis, and Cytirium, each of which claimed the honour of having given birth to one of the masters of the great philosophic schools.

All systems which the reason of man can construct in his search after truth, a search so restless, so laborious and so often in vain, whether these systems be called dogmatism and scepticism, materialism and idealism, sensualism and spiritualism, pantheism and dualism, naturalism and fatalism, optimism and pessimism, even nihilism, all have found their definite expression in Greece. To philosophy, as to literature, poetry, and art, Greece has given its typical forms and has realised the ideal. It is possible to equal, but not to surpass the masters. Empedocles and Pythagoras, Socrates, Aristotle and Plato, Zeno and Epicurus, in their way, are as perfect as Praxiteles and Phidias, Homer or Pindar, Euripides or Sophocles, Æschylus or Demosthenes. Whoever, after that creative age wills to become a philosopher, that is, wills to solve the problem of the value of reason, of the principle of things, the destiny of man and the conduct ol life, must acknowledge a forerunner and a master among the Ionians or Pythagoreans, the Eleatic philosophers or the Sophists, in the Porch or Academy. In this active period, so excited, but so fruitful, system succeeded to system, and school overthrew school; the dynamism of Thales and Pherecydes gave place to the atomism of Democritus; the positivism of Parmenides to the abstractions of Pythagoras; dogmatism was outflanked by the nihilism of the sophists, like Protagoras and Gorgias; Socrates routed the sophists and prepared the reign of Plato and Aristotle; and lastly, Pyrrho was born again, and Epicurus and Zeno strove for the mastery over consciences. There was not a single error which had not its apostles, and not a reasonable truth which had not its disciples; but in spite of these efforts reason always showed itself weak and hesitating before certain essential truths: pure theism, the creation of matter, immortality and future life.

The Greek intellect only escaped from pantheism to end in the dualism of intelligence and eternal matter; it was never able to demonstrate that the human race did not finally acquiesce in annihilation, nor to offer to conscience an exterior and positive sanction. Faith alone teaches effectively these necessary truths, and they have become the heritage of all only by the testimony of Jesus. Reason demonstrates them when the voice of God declares them; reason had a presentiment of them, but discovers them slowly, and with difficulty, and cannot give them a perfect enunciation.

In passing over to Rome, Greek philosophy, like all other things, experienced the influence of new surroundings. The positive genius of the conquering race, daughter of Ceres and Mars, agricultural and warlike, lost no time in vain speculation, but was content to reproduce in eloquent language and in immortal poems the greater systems of its masters. Cicero, Lucretius, Varro, Horace and Virgil invented nothing, but reproduced Greek teaching. More concerned with morals than dogma, in living and acting than dreaming and thinking, they applied themselves to the problem most important in life: Wherein consists happiness and the chief good? What road leads thither? Such questions as these could not be put in the temples, in the celebration of the mysteries, and the esoteric science of the sacerdotal castes. Paganism could only lull the souls of the crowd with the dreams of a fancied immortality, and bow them before the gods, whose legends and scandalous emblems stimulated and deified every vice. The philosophic conscience was higher than the religious conscience of paganism.

It is at least honourable to reason that it asked these great questions neglected by worship, and often spoke to man in the lofty language of duty and virtue. It is far from finding a solution, it mingles many and grave errors with its sublime precepts ; but it would be unjust to misunderstand the efforts it made and the success which more than once rewarded its perseverance. In the time of Augustus moral philosophers were few; Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius came later; those intellects, which, among all the heathen, best taught duty and seemed to wait for the first rays of Gospel light, in order to expand. But if writers were few, men who professed moral and practical philosophy were many ; deed is better than word ; contemporary authors testify that philosophy was never more active, and was entering upon its period of proselytism and organization. Greece had the glory of creating philosophy, Rome that of organizing it, and applying it to the amelioration of life.

The genius of Rome explains its practical tendency, and explains why in that age philosophy assumed a new character; why, usually so personal and intimate, confined to the schools, and reserved to the disciples and the elect, it now made an impression on the crowd. It is not enough to take into account its conquering, apostolic, and almost religious course; there is complete evidence of the decay of heathen religions and the moral inadequacy of their priests. The priests, indeed, were dumb; they had no answer for the great problem of life, no balm for the wounds of sufferers; they lived satisfied with the sterile observances of their pompous rites, playing upon the superstition of the people, scarcely concealing their scepticism in regard to their pretended mysteries. The philosophers had taken the place of pontiffs, and philosophy attempted to play the part abandoned by religion. The philosophers, like the priests, were separate from the crowd by their dress; they were seen in the streets cloaked, with long beards, and staves in their hands. A poet wrote of them: "It seems, that they hold their head above vices and the places where men congregate."[1] They had daily conversations and familiar sermons; they taught morals and gave consolation; exhorted and rebuked. Important towns had their doctors of philosophy, handsomely paid out of public funds, and they were attached as chaplains to the houses of the great; those whom misfortune overtook called in the consolation of a philosopher.[2] Augustus had such a philosopher, Areus, to whom he sent Livia in order to be consoled for the death of Drusus.

They made proselytes as believers did. The philosopher Stertinius met, on a river's bank, an unfortunate man, about to drown himself in despair; he stopped him, and, by his exhortations, gave him a new desire for life. The convert allowed his beard to grow; and, having thus become a philosopher, followed the master who had saved him. They had their ceremonials, their superstitions, and their bigotry. Was a man under the influence of some dangerous desire? There were words which could help against this evil, and in a great measure deliver him from it. Was the desire of praise a temptation? Such and such a salutary practice, such and such a book read thrice over, according to due rites, would accomplish a cure.

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[1] Credibile est illos pariter vitiisque locisque
Altius humanis exeruisse caput."—Ov. Fasti i. 299.

[2] Seneca, *De Consolat.*, ad Marciam, cap. iv.

In regard to the doctrine and philosophy of these sages, we shall find that there were two great schools; that of Epicurus and that of Zeno. Both sought for happiness: one in enjoyment, the other in virtue; one in the "feeling," the other in the "will." We may put out of sight that scepticism which, on the decline of every civilisation, draws after it the disappointed; such as the Cynics who, like Diogenes, took as their law nature with all its instincts, and practised, while they despised, all the vices they could not cure. We may except also the new Academy whose few disciples perpetuated the traditions of Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle.

The Epicureans said: The whole science of happiness consists in procuring pleasant sensations; all excess implies or causes pain; we must learn to be moderate in everything, even in pleasure. For the true disciples of Epicurus, virtue itself or moderation is not the end of man, but the perfect means of enjoyment; all ends in the "Ego" and in the satisfaction of the "Ego." It is the very refinement of corruption and egoism.

The Stoics appealed to the nobler side of man: Thou art free, they said to him, thou art thine own master. Since thy will is thine and can learn to master itself, happiness lies in self-mastery. Pain does not exist; persecution and death are naught; no one can take thee away from thyself; that is enough for the wise man. So these Stoics, proud and untameable, went out into a rotten world, defying all oppression, and spitting out their very tongues at the tyrants who were unable to subdue them. In the light of the Gospel it is plain that such a doctrine, with its haughty airs, is but a veil for vanity, illusion, and weakness; but it must be recognised that such pride makes its way, and it is pleasant to discover these wills of iron, upright and inflexible, in the midst of the frightful despotism of Rome and of pagan corruption.

The school of Epicurus never produced a hero, either in Greece or Rome. The heroism which so imperiously commands the personal sacrifice of the individual, at times even unto death, could not flourish in those consciences for whom enjoyment was the sovereign good. They corrupted, moreover, one of its living wells, in that they did not share in the stir of public affairs, according to the precept of the Master: "Live in secret." They did not even understand public life, as is witnessed by that strange judgment of the Epicurean sect on Pyrrhus: "What had he to do with marching an army through the Peloponnesus, and why did he not rather keep himself ensconced at home, with a garland on his head, intent on making good cheer and enjoying himself?"[1]

The school of Zeno set a man in arms against himself, made him disregard pain, and, in despite of everything, keep his independence and his liberty, thus sowing in consciences the germ of masculine virtue. The greatest men of action in the old world, Cato, Brutus, and Marcus Aurelius, were Stoics.

If we examine the Epicureans and Stoics we shall find among them some fine thoughts: concerning moderation among the former, and power among the latter. It would be easy to compose from them an edifying manual of almost all virtues, private and public: a pure conscience, temperance, gentleness, justice, prudence, the contempt of riches, calmness, peace, inflexibility of character, friendship, devotion and kindness. All these precepts have been formulated in immortal language; we may call them diamonds of the finest water, cut and set; the jewels of philosophy.

If fine words could save souls, the school of Epicurus or that of Zeno might have cured mankind; but talking is one thing, acting another; philosophy has often excelled in the one and failed in the other. This weakness, a vice common

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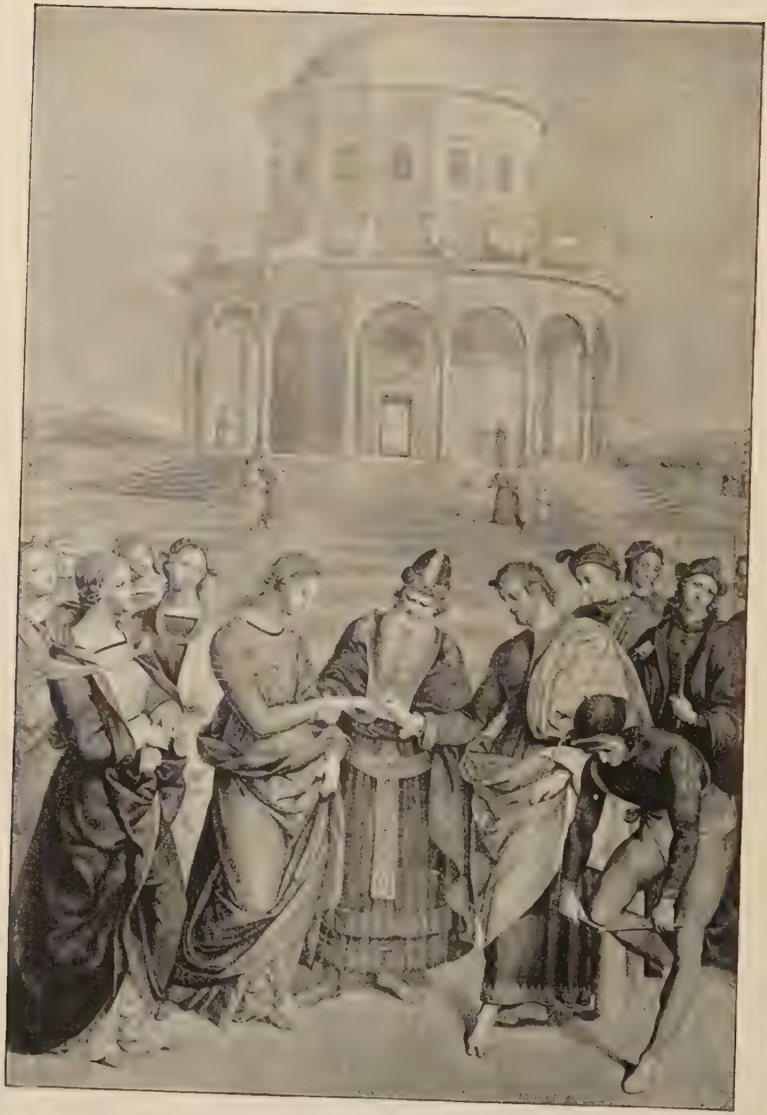
[1] Plutarch, *De Vir. illustr.*, Pyrrhus.



THE MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN.

From the Painting by Raphael.

to the two rival sects, explains the barrenness of their proselytism. Epicureans and Stoics are after all at one in the worship of themselves; the "Ego" is the end of both, that satisfaction of the "Ego," the sum of their teaching. But the "Ego" in this world, whether we place it with Epicurus in "sense," or with Zeno in "will," is a prey to sorrow. How shall sorrow be conquered, since it cannot be suppressed? There is but one resource, voluptuous indifference, and, in fact, both find, the one by "tension," *τόνος*, the other by "relaxation," *ἄνεσις*, their final refuge. A boundless sorrow underlies all souls seeking after philosophic wisdom, they feel it inexorable under the indifference in which they are wrapped, they succumb to its pressure, and rest alone with their "Ego," which, after all, escapes them. If we listen to them, man belongs to himself, and is his own master; his life is in his own hands, and, if he choose to put an end to it, he has no account to render to anybody; suicide is a right, perhaps even a duty, and may, in any case, be a necessity. Man has one advantage over the gods, said the Stoics, he can die. The saint of the sect, Cato, committed suicide. Nothing in them was divine; the god whom they called Nature was worth no more than the god of the religions and the mythologies. It was not the living and personal God, but Fate, blind, mute, and inaccessible; man must submit to it, man crushed and conquered, overthrown and desperate.

Men have tried to make a Christianity out of that; as if religion could issue from philosophy, the Gospel beatitudes from those of Epicurus or Zeno, the law of sacrifice from the law of selfishness, God the Father from Fate, force from weakness, inexhaustible and divine hope from indifference and despair; as if Jesus, who brought goodness, and light, and life, were only a philosopher, a descendant of some Roman sect. No; in spite of philosophy and its pearls, the world before him was nothing but a dung-heap; and he, the great sower, threw his words upon it as a leaven to transform the whole, whose ineradicable vitality always works upon the persistent paganism of poor mankind.

It was necessary that Jesus Christ should be born from among the Jewish people. It is the humblest of all nations; but it has given birth to Christ, and, for this very reason, it takes place, in spite of its littleness, beside and above the Roman empire, the religions of heathendom, Hellenic culture, and the greatest powers of history. Other nations seem given over to the initiative of their own intellects, and the mercy of their vices; Israel increased under the high guardianship of God. Apart from all, and kept by him, it appeared in the midst of the human floods as the ark which held the salvation of the future. The development of the kingdom of man, with its religious transformations, cannot be explained without Judaism. Jehovah, its God, has become the God of mankind, and its Messiah, always expected, but finally misunderstood by it, has become the Saviour and the Regenerator of the world.

Nothing is more wonderful than this little Semitic tribe starting, under divine command, from the plains of Chaldaea, with its faith in One God, with the hope of becoming a people as the stars in number, and of seeing all the families of the earth blessed in Abraham, its chief.[1] It camped under tents in Canaan, and there raised altars to Jehovah, whose name it invoked; emigrated into Egypt, to the land of Goshen, there to toil and increase. The severe hospitality of the Pharaohs soon changed it into slavery; under the inspiration of Moses it broke the yoke which crushed it, retired into the desert, and became once more nomadic and pastoral. Far from all civilization, it received on Sinai the Law which was to separate it from the heathen world. By patience, courage, and faith it conquered the land which God had promised to it, and made itself into a little independent kingdom, until the day when, yielding to its fate, it was cast, like a handful of dust, abroad among the nations. At the time of this hasty sketch Israel had reached the last age of national life, and was about to lose political independence for ever.

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[1] Gen. xii. 3.

After having resisted the most terrible intestine divisions, exile, and servitude among strangers such as the Persians and the Greeks; after having been able to reconquer its former autonomy by a handful of brave men, after four centuries of subjugation, Judaea was at this time governed by Herod the Idumaean, a creature of Caesar and the senate. It was now only dependent on the empire in which it was about to be absorbed. Then, as in our own time, small states could not hope for a morrow.

Except the Sadducees, strict conservatives and courtiers of an anti-national power, lovers of peace above all, and sacrificing everything for peace, even to the independence of their country, all the doctors, the scribes, and the mass of the people, understood the crisis of their nation; they saw the abyss, but they did not, and could not, believe in the catastrophe.

This vigorous race willed with such firmness to live and to become a great state that neither reverses, disasters, nor time, dissipated its hope or scattered its patriotic illusions. It was the elect people, and had the promises of God: the throne of David was indestructible, the blood of the Maccabees was incorrupt; the darker grew the horizon, the brighter became the ideal image of the Messiah; misfortune did not subdue but exasperated them. As they approached the gulf in which it was to disappear, their faith in an ultimate triumph increased. The majority of the doctors had not ceased, by a false interpretation of the Scriptures, and by the apocalyptical writings of the last days, that of Enoch above all, to entertain the most disastrous speculations on the future and the political grandeur of Israel. They materialized prophecies relative to the Messianic era and the Messenger of God who should bring it about; they were determined to see in that era only the re-establishment of their ruined kingdom; they dreamt of a restoration which should give them universal empire, and made for themselves a fantastic Messiah, a sort of divine Caesar, stretching over the conquered world a more glorious sceptre than that of Solomon.

Fidelity to their religious law found, it is true, in this error, a strong support, for this fidelity, according to them, was the very condition of the realization of their wild hopes. God is true, said the masters; his word can neither deceive nor fail: "Keep his law, and he will accomplish those promises which our sins and our apostasies hold in suspense."

The greatest peril for a nation is to misunderstand its destiny; the failure of the national conscience in the Jewish people was the first cause of their ruin. Its destiny, according to its race and religion, was one thing; according to its political form, another. We must not confound Judaism with the Jewish nation: the one is a race and a religion, the other a political form, a mode of being in which race and religion may vary. Judaism still subsists after five thousand years. The Jewish nation lived only for a few hundred years, from Saul to the Babylonian exile, from about the year 1000 to 588. Exiled for seventy years, enslaved for two centuries under the kings of Persia, a century and a half under the Graeco-Macedonian dominion, it regained free government under the princes of the Maccabaean family, but that revival lasted for only a century. In the year 63 Pompey took possession of Jerusalem; and the Romans were careful to give an Idumaean king to Judaea; but they only watched their opportunity to make it into a mere province of the empire, and in order to destroy more surely all desire for independence in this stubborn people, stiff-necked as a bar of iron, according to the strong expression of one of the prophets,[1] they soon destroyed for ever the capital and temple.

National existence is but a relatively short phase in the fifty centuries of the history of Israel ; and has had no other end than to give a firmer consistency to the race, and to permit a completer organization of the religion. This result obtained. Israel might disappear as a kingdom ; but, even when dispersed, it was to live as a race and a Church. Among the other peoples of antiquity, the state and the religion mingled together, lived, developed, and died together ; when the nationality fell, the gods departed. But in this nation all is strange ; nationality might perish, the race and the religion would still grow greater, and, far from overthrowing their providential destiny, destruction only aided it.

The office of Judaism was not to conquer the world : all in it is religious and sacerdotal. It was not distinguished from its surroundings by arts or arms, by numbers, or science ; its glory is in a dogma, a moral law, a hope. God raised it from the midst of the heathen to be his witness, the apostle of his unity, the herald of his justice and mercy, the guardian of his decalogue, the focus of Messianic hopes. Through the whole world the Jew was to carry the book which contained his divine treasures, to publish the dogma, to practise the law, to declare the hope ; he was to build synagogues as a temple for his book ; he was to sit down before the sacred chest wherein was deposited the holy roll ; to read it, study it, and comment on it.

Theological science multiplied its centres ; it flourished as well at Babylon, amid Persian surroundings, as at Alexandria, in the midst of Greek philosophy, and at Jerusalem, where the doctors spoke their mother-tongue and preserved unmixed the tradition of their ancestors. While the heathen ran in crowds to their idols, the Jew remained faithful to the only God who governed the world, to the law which ruled over conscience, and to its unquenchable hope in the hero foretold by his prophets.

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[1] "Durus es tu, et nervus ferreus cervix tua."—Isa. xlviii. 4.

Thus, at the very time when the nation drew to its end, the race was extended; under the shock of various events, brought about by Providence, such as war and colonization, exile and voluntary emigration, and even the favour of its conquerors, it was dispersed to the four corners of the world. Jewish colonies were everywhere, in the south of Asia and Arabia, on all the shores of Asia Minor, in Egypt, in Europe, Greece, and Italy. This extension, which began from the sixth century before Jesus Christ, by the "carrying away," and which had for its theatre the empire of Assyria, was continued under Alexander in the immense empire of Macedonia; was developed under his successors in Syria under the Seleucidae, and in Egypt under the Lagidae; it received from Rome a new impulse: there was not henceforward an important town which did not possess a Jewish colony and community.

"It would be difficult," said Strabo, "to find a place, in all the earth, which had not received the Jews and where they were not strongly established." They were on all the shores of the Mediterranean, at the mouths of all the great rivers: the Nile, Danube, Tigris and Euphrates, and, no doubt, the Ganges, for in their migrations eastward they went beyond the provinces of upper Asia and reached China and the Petchili. What they had taken they never let go, and they rooted themselves firmly. Babylon remained the centre during the period of Assyrian exile, Alexandria during that of Greek colonization, while Jerusalem was the burning centre which kept alive the hope of national recovery.

By establishing themselves in the midst of strange and heathen peoples, the Jew was not incorporated with them; he lived alone, preserved the free exercise of his worship, and often kept a sort of religious nationality; he paid tribute, but was exempt from military service; he had his own rulers for judges and governors. A few took part in the government of the towns, armies or states; but these were exceptions: the Jews confined themselves more willingly to traffic, commerce and finance. Grouped in quarters apart, they built synagogues and proseuchae at the entrances of towns, near rivers, where they could perform their ablutions. Far from objecting to this isolation, the Romans, like the Lagidae, favoured it. Augustus ordered the governors of Asia not to apply to the Jews the severe laws of the empire in regard to assemblies and societies. They were allowed to gather the tax for the Temple and to send it to Jerusalem, as a voluntary contribution. They had the right of judging their own causes before a Jewish rather than a Roman tribunal. As for military service, which was for a time exacted under Tiberius, there was no longer any question of that for them in the west.

This large tolerance greatly favoured the development and increase of this race, of which it is impossible to deny the practical intelligence, firmness, subtleness, sobriety and, as Tacitus declares, the love of giving life and the contempt of death.[1] None has ever better known the art of gathering riches, for none has ever shown a more boundless common sense, an austerer frugality, more indefatigable work, and a more tenacious will. The preoccupations of money-getting, which, in other races, stifle all higher ideas, and defile the source of what is divine, have not succeeded in subduing or destroying the religion of this nation. The tradesmen and merchants, even from the lowest packman and chafferers up to the bankers and the great brokers, remained members of the community of which the centre was at Jerusalem, and the radii wherever a synagogue was built; they felt themselves children of Abraham, and bore this title in the world of the "goym," with an aristocratic pride, as the Moslim bear their titles amid

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[1] "Huic generandi amor et moriendi contemptus."—Tacit., *Hist.* v. 5.

Christians and infidels, the "Giaour;" they were inviolably attached to the law and the book which contained it; they rested on the sabbath day, celebrated their rites far away from pagan eye, in their proseuchae, and the shade of their sacred gardens. They would not sit at meat with the people of the country; through pride of blood they only intermarried with the women of their own race. They were wont every year, above all, at the great feasts, Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Feast of Dedication, to visit Palestine and the holy city; all were obliged at one time in their lives to sacrifice in person to Jehovah in the only place which he had chosen, and they sent a tribute, called first-fruits or offerings, to enrich the treasury of the Temple and provide for the needs of their necessitous brethren.

Other races are lost in the surroundings into which they emigrate: the Jew has but one country, the holy place of Zion: the rest of the world is only a strange land for him; he goes and comes, passes or stays, but without attaching himself by too close ties to the profane soil which he disdains; and if he accepted or bought the title of Roman citizen, it was to give a still higher guarantee of his independence as a Jew. The Temple was his sacred Palladium, and holy Salem the star towards which he turned in prayer, as the Mussulman towards Mecca and the Kaaba.

Thus, by his book and synagogues, his worship and manners, his exclusiveness and indestructible attachment to his absent country, his fidelity to the traditions of the elders, his brotherhood and powerful organization, through all the scorn of which he was the object and the persecutions which assailed him, in spite of surroundings which would have led away and corrupted every other race of less keen a temper, the Jews of the dispersion remained a religious community, a Church: defying paganism, despising the gods, resisting Greek culture and Roman manners, and, always undisturbed in its faith, persisting in the belief that they were destined to subdue the world, as soon as Messiah came.

Though he disdained the heathen world, and was more engaged in defending himself against its influence than in converting it to his own worship, the Jew still exercised in it a true proselytism. He applied himself to this with zeal, perseverance, and ability. We find in his mission all the qualities and faults of his race: suppleness and the arts of insinuation, craft and cupidity, pride of blood and intrigue.[1] By means of slaves and freedmen, he insinuated himself into the houses of the greatest personages, and even into the palace of the Caesars; in his trading vessels he went through all the seas and the Mediterranean bays; by the pedlar, who, with his pack, traversed the streets and the suburban paths, he acted upon the lower classes. "Our laws," said Philo, not without some exaggeration, "draw all men to them, barbarians, strangers and Greeks, those who inhabit the continents, and those who inhabit the isles in the east, and the west, and in Europe."

Women were converted more easily than men;[2] all those of Damascus, if we may believe Josephus,[3] had embraced Judaism. Men, and principally foreigners, yielded also, drawn by the advantages of a conversion which entailed the right of citizenship, the exemption from military service, and the right of marriage with the women of the country. The need of a positive faith and an elevated doctrine must have drawn some of those whom paganism had disgusted and scepticism discouraged.

There were two classes of converts: the "proselytes of the gates," and those of "justice." The first, a kind of intermediary class between Gentiles and Jews, still unclean, but contact with whom did not defile the true son of Abraham, were only bound to worship the true God and to keep the seven precepts of Noah.[1] The second became true Jews by circumcision, by a baptism of immersion and sacrifice; submitting to all the customs and the laws of the divine covenant, they were solemnly admitted into the theocracy; and were called the Perfect.

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[1] Matt. xxiii. 15.

[2] Acts xiii. 50; xvi. 14.

[3] *Antiq.* xviii. 3-5.

In spite of their zeal for proselytism the Jews did not succeed in subduing the Gentile world; Gentile and Jew represented two hostile forces, each antagonistic to the other.

The devout and unyielding Pharisee held the Gentile in horror, while the Gentile despised the Jew; the one shook the dust from his feet as though it stained him to tread on heathen ground; the other heaped ridicule and scorn on the circumcised. Cicero could only see in Judaism "a people born for slavery;" Seneca regarded it as "a miserable and criminal nation;" more bitter still, Tacitus speaks of its "foolish, and despicable worship," and calls it "the dregs of slavery." Between Israel and paganism there was more than a barrier. a gaping and impassable gulf. For more than six centuries scattered through all the nations, it had never brought one to its own faith; it imposed it simply upon two neighbouring tribes; the Idumaeans under John Hyrcanus,[2] and the Ituraeans under Aristobulus.[3] Its God was more terrible than attractive, and the law, with its scrupulous rites, was rather a yoke than a support; it enchained and overwhelmed the conscience, but did not sustain it.

This religious race was evidently better endowed for defence than for attack and conquest; it had greater cohesion than expansion, more stiffness than suppleness; it was more resisting than penetrating; it had power, but no sympathy; like a rock, it had hardness, but no sovereign energy to assimilate and transform its surroundings; its barrenness as a conquering power is only equalled by its wonderful indestructibility.

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[1] Exod. xii. 19; Lev. xvii. 12, xxiv. 16; Ezek. xiv. 16.

[2] *Antiq.* xiii. 9, 7; xv. 7, 9.

[3] *Ibid.* xiii. 11, 3; 15, 4.

Nothing in history better proves the work of God than this little people, assailed on all sides by universal heathendom, and never subdued by it. Amid all its wanderings across the most diverse civilisations, it occasionally borrowed from Chaldaean and Assyrian traditions, from the doctrines and worship of Egypt, from Persian theology, and Greek philosophy, but it purified them all and itself remained the same.

When all was Pantheistic, it was not so; all idolatrous, it stood firm; when all worshipped nature, it worshipped not; when all were fetishists, it yielded not. Around it, chiefs and kings were made into divinities; it recognised in Abraham only a father, and carefully concealed the tomb of Moses, who remained simply its supreme lawgiver. It slew the prophets; but their words remained in force, and the voice of the dead became only more eloquent to those who had misunderstood them. It resisted all: idolatry, philosophy, Greek culture, persecution, and time, more terrible than all; it resisted even its own Messiah. It may be said of the Jew that if he were neither a convert or pervert, and if he never changed anything, he at least preserved everything. This, under God, was the part he was destined to play.

In the midst of the weariness and disgust which enfeebled the ancient world, a vast hope ever swelled in the breast of this people; it alone believed in the redemption of man, alone in a prodigy inexplicable by reason; it looked forward to the age of gold to which all other nations looked back. Thanks to Judaism, the idea of God had ever shone on a darkened world, and its action had always been visible amid all human extravagances. From the Jewish blood, quickened by the Spirit, he was born whose name is Saviour, the Being who realized the prophetic ideal and snatched the human soul from the bottomless abyss of error and vice in which for centuries it had struggled, vanquished, and despairing.

The imperfection and mistakes of man, his illusions and narrowness of mind, always leave their imprint on the vast work of God. The Jews, as a whole, were false to their destiny; they mingled the most absurd exclusiveness with the grand idea of one God; they stifled the lofty morality of Moses under wholly material observances and rites; they degraded their hopes of a Messiah to the level of their race prejudices, of their national and religious preconceptions. They thought that Jehovah, the one true God, was their special God; their ritual and ceremonial law the necessary and universal condition of salvation; and the expected Messiah the great conqueror who should at last avenge their long oppression.

These prejudices had blinded and hardened the popular conscience to such an extent that Judaism, destined by Providence to prepare the way for the Messiah, became the greatest obstacle to the Messianic work. But as paganism had its elect who escaped the universal contagion, so Judaism had its faithful people, a little unknown flock, knowing not the mistakes of doctors, priests and people, keeping in silence their hope in God.

The Gospel documents throw a flood of light on this portion of the nation set apart, on these "Israelites without guile,"[1] among whom God was to choose the instruments for his work Many types borrowed from different groups are sketched in lines calm but sure, firm and deep. The old priest Zacharias, the shepherds of Bethlehem, the aged Simeon, Anna the prophetess, enable us to see that, in the sacerdotal world, all consciences were not warped and petrified by the casuistry of the Scribes, that in the high and learned society of Jerusalem, and even in the middle classes,

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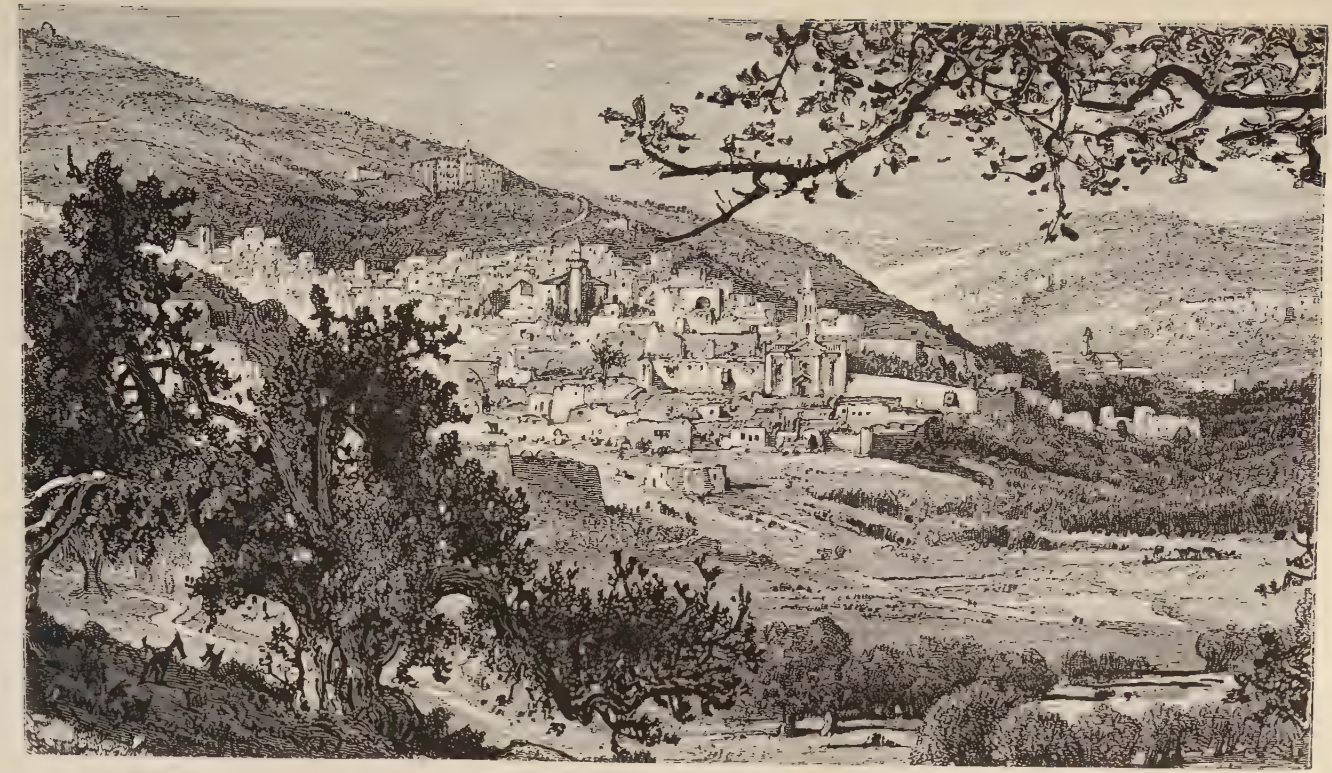
[1] John i. 47.



NAZARETH, FROM THE SOUTH.

Now called En Nâsirah. The large building on the hill of Neby Sa'în is the English Orphanage for Girls.

among the women above all, piety inspired their worship and filled more than one heart with ardent prayers, pleading for the mercy of God on the people and for the coming of the true Saviour.

Such were the elements fused in mankind, towards the eighth century of Rome, in the 192nd Olympiad, and according to Jewish chronology, at the end of four thousand years from the creation. It was, according to the first word which fell from the lips of Jesus,[1] "the fulness of time." The empire, paganism, philosophy, official Judaism, all human forces had accomplished their evolution; the world was dying, enslaved by Roman policy, degraded and brought to despair by false religions, asking philosophers in vain for the secrets of life and virtue. Judaism itself was in the death-throe, faithless to its destiny. There was never a more critical moment; but God was over all, and among his elect people humble souls prayed and hoped. Beyond Judaism, a vague expectation, to which poets, historians and the Sibylline books bear witness, was astir, and kept the world in suspense: such a presentiment as goes before all the great events of history.

The birth of Jesus was at hand.

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[1] Mark i. 15.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS. HIS CONCEPTION.

THE birth of Jesus was unlike our own. He was not born like us, "of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man";[1] bringing to mankind the secret and the power of a new birth by the Spirit, he was born of a woman and of the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God is the sovereign power; who commands the evolution of all things, and presides over the ordered and progressive movement of the universe. As he once intervened in chaos and matter to produce sentient being, as in animal life to produce thinking creatures, so was he to intervene among thinking creatures, in order that "Earth might give her fruit," and that mankind might see the Saviour, the Holy One, the Son of God,[2] blossom on the earth.

The result of divine intervention had been till now only a creature; this time the result was infinitely great. God united himself personally to his work; and as he had incarnated life in matter, sensation in life, thought in sensation, he now made himself incarnate in mankind. The separate kingdoms are superimposed on, and enwrap, each other: the kingdom of life is added to the kingdom of matter; the animal kingdom to the kingdom of life; the human kingdom to the animal kingdom; the Kingdom of God had come, and the Son of God was made man. All these successive births together constitute the great drama of the world, they are all mysterious; and the more perfect the created being, the more profound the mystery.

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[1] John i. 13.

[2] Luke i. 35.

Life is more hidden than matter, animal more enigmatical than organic life, man more inscrutable than the animal, Jesus more incomprehensible than all. He who would know the origin of things must understand the material conditions under which beings are produced, the first cause escapes all experience; we cannot tell whence comes matter, whence life, whence sentient being, whence a thinking creature, whence mind, whence the Christ. Before such phenomena science can only confess her ignorance; but reason, looking into causes, says: From the Spirit of God. We must ask the Gospel documents[1] under what sensible and historical form the action of the Spirit was manifest in the birth of Jesus. The gospels are the only documents of the ancient world which give us any details of this event, so secret, almost unperceived, which was, however, to change the face of the world.

The first scene passed in an obscure region of Galilee; the name, till then unknown, was Nazareth, which means flower or branch. Coming from Jerusalem, the little town is seen from the last hills of Samaria, as a white point on the scarped heights overlooking the plain of Jezreel; its grey houses, square, with flat roofs, are spread on the eastern slope of two hills, separated by a ravine, up which the steep main street of Nazareth climbs. There are the fountains for ablution, the workshops, the market, the synagogue. To the east of the town is a valley wherein is the well now called the Fountain of Mary. The ravine and the valley join each other, beyond the last houses, in a little plain which makes the grassy bottom of the cup within which Nazareth is placed. Green in the spring, this plain becomes dry in summer, and is the threshing-floor where the people of Nazareth tread out the wheat and the barley under the feet of their oxen and winnow their grain in the evening breeze.

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[1] For the value of these documents, see Introduction.

Olives and fig trees, nopals with large evergreen leaves, pomegranates, almonds, and lemon trees, intermingled with black cypresses, justify the name of this little town, so fertile and flourishing. The paths which lead to the well are animated morning and evening by troops of girls and women, who walk slowly, silent, and grave, their vessels on their heads, and their hands raised to hold them, their veils cast back and floating on the air, like Greek statues in motion. On feast days and the sabbath the field-paths are full. Groups of men and women, apart, are seen on the slope of the hills, and under the olive trees, near the tombs; they sit on the ground and talk; men covered with their cloaks, women in striped robes, their brows bound, wrapped as in a shroud by their large white linen shawls. The place is full of sweetness and silence; there are no sharp outlines in these undulating, unbroken hills. The chain of Djebel-es-Sikh forms a circular horizon; no sound troubles this solitude, where looks and thought mount naturally to heaven. There, in one of those quiet homes, lived unknown the maiden who was to receive the highest revelation of God.

The hopes of the Jewish nation were about to bear fruit. God looked not to the great, or the religious chiefs, the doctors, the wise, or the rich; but chose from the crowd a humble creature. He reserved to himself, in the heart of the people, souls wherein dwelt the very genius of the nation, from whom he summoned the elect who should save it. The maiden was called Mary, and was not yet sixteen years old.

Tradition says that her father was named Joachim and her mother Anne; it is believed that her father died when she was yet an infant; of royal descent and of the race of

David;[1] she was educated in the Temple. It was a strange thing that among a people of whose women each might hope to be the mother of the Messiah, in a race where, on that account, barrenness was a disgrace, she, obedient to a divine inspiration, vowed herself to God as a virgin. Yet, according to Jewish law and custom, being sole heiress, she was espoused and promised to a man named Joseph, of her own tribe and family, her nearest relation who could receive her inheritance.[2] The ceremony of entrance into her husband's house had not yet been celebrated; she lived in her mother's home, preparing her wedding-garments, like all the young women of her country.[3]

Now, one day, she saw, under a human form, Gabriel, the angel of the Lord, appear to her, and enter the house.

The angel said to her: "Hail, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women." Jewish maidens, when betrothed, live retired and concealed with their companions, far from the sight of men.

"And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."[4]

The Virgin then understood that he spoke of the expected Saviour, who should raise for ever the throne of David which had been cast down, who should be the glory of Israel, the desire of the nations, the pride of his mother. How should she be called to play this divine part, who had resolved never to become a mother after the manner of men? In her surprise, she simply asked: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"[1]

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[1] Appendix C: *The Two Genealogies of Jesus.*

[2] Appendix C: *Ibid.*

[3] Appendix B: *Marriage among the Jews.*

[4] Luke i. 29-33.

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." And the angel gave her a sign: "Thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her."[2]

Such was the birth of Jesus.

His hold on humanity was only through his mother. He who came to inaugurate the new race of the sons of God, stood apart from the ordinary course of nature. He was to be begotten by no man, but of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin. Thus one of the greatest, most wondrous sayings which ever fell from the mouth of a seer of Israel, one of the most mysterious, was accomplished: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."[3]

Nearly a hundred years later, an aged apostle, one most profoundly initiated into the secrets of his master's soul, St. John, was to give the interpretation of this fact. He was to borrow the very language of Plato, and in a page which surpasses all that Greek philosophy had said most sublimely about God, he was to teach that in Jesus: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."[4]

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[1] Luke i. 34.

[2] Luke i. 35-38.

[3] Isaiah vii. 14.

[4] John i. 14.

The highest aspiration of mankind found in the Son of Man a reality which went beyond it. God was made man; and human nature, in Christ, became the nature of God. This being was to be the centre of the whole religious movement; whoever would raise himself to God must ally himself to him; he is the stone[1] placed in the midst of time; those who fall against it would be broken; those who rested on it were never to be shaken; little by little they were to form the building, the city, the Kingdom of God, the supreme end of all creation, in whose expectation the whole creature languished, suffered, and groaned.

When the Spirit of God acts in certain elect souls to the accomplishment of the same end, he draws them towards each other and associates them by an irresistible movement. On the day after that on which Mary was called to be the mother of Jesus, she went in all haste to another woman, her cousin, chosen, in spite of her age and her barrenness, to be the mother of John the Baptist.

Elisabeth dwelt with her husband, the priest Zacharias, in the mountains of Judaea, in a little spot such as we frequently find in Palestine.[2] The village called Karem, now Ain-Karim,[3] is situated on a spur of the mountains, which overtops and closes in a circle of hills. Vineyards, diversified by olive and fig trees, abound, and the fountain which springs up near the village bears their name. On the unbroken line of the horizon are some little fortified watch-towers and a few tufts of terebinths and arbutus with their lustrous foliage.

The meeting of these two women, told at length by St. Luke, places in a full light all that was so strangely agitating this little inner circle in which the great hopes of Israel were beginning to be realized, and wherein God was preparing in secret the salvation of the human race.

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[1] Rom. ix. 32.

[2] See Appendix D: *The Place of John the Baptist's Birth.*

[3] "Vineyard Well" in Hebrew.

Those who share the same sentiment understand each other without words; and the two mothers understood each other at once.

"And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb: and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."[1]

Then Mary declared to Elisabeth the mystery of her own vocation and motherhood.

"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy: as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."[2]

Poetry is the language of strong impressions and lofty ideas; among the Jews, as among all Eastern nations, it was full

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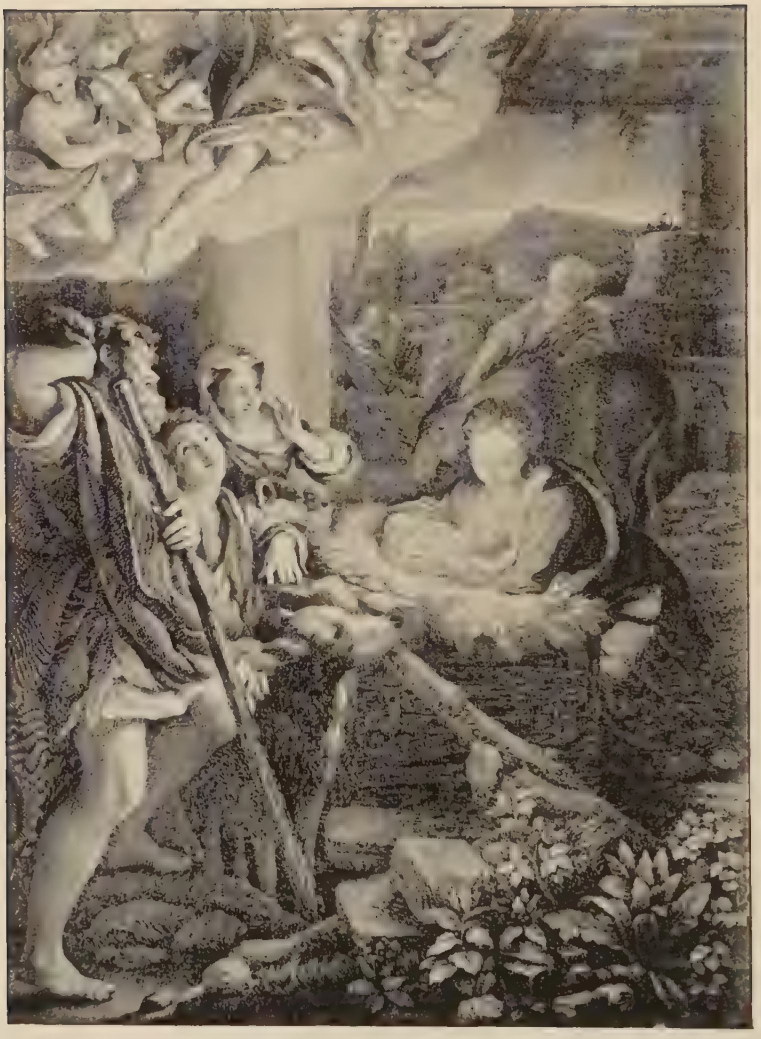
[1] Luke i. 41-45.

[2] Luke i. 46-55.



THE HOLY NIGHT.

From the Painting by Correggio.

of inspiration: every soul is poetic, and sings in joy or sorrow. If ever a full heart gave vent to an inspired hymn, it was the heart of the maiden elected by God to be the mother of the Messiah. She borrowed, from the histories in the Bible, of those women who before her had felt the awe of motherhood, as Leah[1] and the mother of Samuel,[2] expressions which she enlarged and transfigured. The national hymns which had celebrated the glory of her people, the mercy, power, wisdom and faithfulness of God, rose naturally to lips accustomed to song. No creature was ever conscious of a higher destiny, and remained more humble and self-forgetting in her greatness. Man naturally exalts himself, and often boasts himself against God on account of his power or intellect; the handmaid of God prevailed through her lowliness, and exalted herself only in God. She prophesied her future glory, and already heard the loud acclaim which should be raised to her through the ages; but in it she saw only the triumph of him who had done to her great things. Not thus speaks any mere woman, a daughter of Eve; this inspired canticle overpassed all earthly bounds, and closed the cycle of the older days; it was no longer hope which called upon God, but triumphant faith which saw and possessed him; it was the hymn of the new age, the most splendid cry of joy which ever sprang from a human breast.

The abode of Mary at Karem, in the house of Zacharias, lasted for three months. It was one long prayer, one uninterrupted confidence and adoration of the designs of God and the religious expectation of their fulfilment. The sentiments which this great hymn of the Virgin expressed were too deep not to exclude all else; she lived in them as those whom love absorbs, but with this difference, that human love is concentrated and isolated, divine love spreads abroad to nourish others; Mary shed rays of God on the family which gave her hospitality, into the souls of Zacharias and Elisabeth, as well as that of the child which should be born.

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[1] Gen. xxx. 10-13.

[2] I. Sam. ii. 1, 8.

When her time was come, Elisabeth gave birth to a son, according to the promises which Zacharias had received, when one morning in the Temple at Jerusalem, at the time of offering incense, he saw at the right hand of the altar the angel of the Lord, and learned from him the great and religious destiny of the child.[1] The birth caused great stir in the neighbouring villages and among the kinsfolk of Zacharias; the advanced age of Elisabeth was known; this birth, beyond ordinary hope, proved that the power of God was there. On all sides the mother was congratulated.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the infant, and this was the occasion of new and extraordinary events. The parents and friends wished, according to custom, to give the first-born the name of his father, Zacharias, but the mother forbade it. Among the Jews the privilege of naming the child is reserved to the mother. None should know better than she; for if the name were to describe him who bore it, the mother's mind would always find the most expressive name, knowing well that she owed this son to God. Elisabeth, prompted by love and faith, chose that the name of the child should express the favour done to the mother. She said: "He shall be called John.[2] And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him."

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[1] Luke i. 1-23.

[2] "The Gift of God."

All the neighbourhood was stirred, and talked of what had happened in the house of the old priest; there was wonder in all the hill country of Judaea, where the tidings of these events were spread abroad. Messianic hopes were then alive among the people, and the great messenger was expected. The son of Zacharias might be either this messenger or some prophet. Men speculated about his future; asking what this child should be, and, according to a favourite formula of the Hebrews, they said: The hand of the Lord is with him.[1]

While these uncertain rumours passed from village to village, the work of God was continued about the cradle of John. His father, too, was carried away by the ancient spirit of the prophets: he in part discovered the mystery of which Mary of Nazareth carried in her bosom the ineffable secret; he had a perfect consciousness of the vocation of his son, he understood that all God had announced by the mouth of his saints and prophets from eternity was now accomplished, and, inspired by the Holy Ghost, he chanted a sublime prophecy:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

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[1] Luke i. 66.

Then, turning to his son, he cried : "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest : for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways ; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God ; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."[1]

The learning of the Pharisees of the school of Hillel or Shammai, the ritual piety of the priesthood, were strangers to such a language ; a new spirit was moving in mankind. Even before his birth, while yet scarce conceived, and from the very womb of his mother, Jesus gave light, sanctity and inspiration. He sanctified John in the womb of Elisabeth, he inspired Zacharias with those accents which recall and rival the ancient prophets ; the old priest transformed by Christ is as great as they.

It is not enough to record the material and tangible facts, we must also lay stress on sentiments, ideas, and inspirations ; the interest of the history lies in those hidden springs which give them life and reality. Nothing here below is visibly accomplished which has not its invisible cause in the soul and in God.

The quiet valley among the hills of Judah, where Mary, Elisabeth, and Zacharias the priest dwelt, is like an inner shrine, or church. Christianity was there in all its fulness ; God was present but unseen ; he exalted the two mothers, and filled their hearts with his word and with his fire. These his creatures, without human resources, divested of all which, humanly speaking, could move the world, were the agents of that nascent force which should occupy, overturn, and transform it ; they declared that the ideal foreseen from afar by the prophets was about to be accomplished; the hopes of the nation found in them a pure and copious source; the great work of God, all the plan of unspeakable mercy, which has for its object the salvation of Israel and of mankind, on condition of self-denial and humility, was conceived and put forth by them with absolute clearness.

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[1] Luke i. 67-79.

In the early days of Christianity, before the marvellous triumph of the Spirit of Jesus, we might perhaps have thought little of these obscure souls and their prophetic songs; but in face of the mature and ever victorious work, we must recognise in them a spirit more than human; they were beings of the highest order, God alone could bring them forth, they are beyond all that the fancy of poets had ventured to imagine.

The Gospels imply that Mary was not present at the birth of John and at the feast of his circumcision; for it is only after his mention of her return to Nazareth that St. Luke narrates the event of which the house of Zacharias was the scene, and there is nothing to disclose or even to suggest her presence.[1] The Virgin was as yet only betrothed; the ceremony of her reception into the home of her husband had not yet been celebrated: the time fixed for this family gathering was drawing on; and she returned to Nazareth.

After the quiet days at Ain-Karim, a trial awaited her. The signs of her condition were evident; it was not clear how God would preserve her maiden honour before men, and in the eyes of the bridegroom to whom she was affianced. Although this thought must have crossed the mind of Mary, that which would have been anguish to an ordinary soul who thought of herself, could not trouble the serenity of her who had said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." All those who feel, in any degree, instruments of God, give themselves with full faith to him ; who knows how to set aside or break down obstacles. "Mary," as Bossuet finely says, "gave up everything to God, and remained in peace."

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[1] Luke i. 56.

Meanwhile at Nazareth, Joseph, who had not been told the mystery of which Mary kept the secret in her reserved humility, saw her state. Appearances led him to believe that his betrothed was unfaithful, but respect for her virtue forbade suspicion. Unable to guess the impenetrable designs of God, he hesitated. In his human justice he resolved on a course which seemed to him the best way out of the difficulty, that rather than make his betrothed a public example as an adulteress, he would put her away privately. The thoughts of man, even the most moderate and wise, are far from the righteousness and the truth of God ; if the resolution of Joseph had been kept, it would have saved his conscience, but it would have destroyed the honour of the mother and her child. When man has done all in his power to learn his duty, he may still make mistakes ; but he merits the help of God, and God intervenes to save him. Joseph was illuminated by the light Divine, and was directly associated with the work to be accomplished so near him, which as yet he did not suspect. In the midst of his doubts and anguish, at the moment when he was about to accomplish what he believed to be right, he had a dream by night : the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, saying : "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus : for he shall save his people from their sins."[1]

The light of God, by whatever way it enters the conscience, whether by outward visions or dreams, in sleep or waking, by sudden and direct inspirations, by a voice from within or from without, from nature or from man, is always clear; the mind is conscious, the will resolves, and the man acts. Joseph awoke and rose, and without hesitation obeyed the word of God.

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[1] Matthew i. 20-22.

The reception of Mary into the house of her betrothed was quickly celebrated, according to the law of Moses and the Jewish and Galilaean customs.[1] There were seven days of feasting; lambs were sacrificed; there was a procession of girls, with lighted lamps, and sprays of myrtle.

The type of the Virgin is purity and grace, sweetness and power, humility and majesty; it has inspired the greatest artists and surpassed their genius; the piety of Christians contemplates it, and the humble maiden of Nazareth stands before the world as the incarnation of the ideal woman.

The marriage had nothing, except the perfection of the pair, to distinguish it from others; apart from Joseph and Mary no one suspected that, in the counsels of God, it was intended to prepare the cradle of Messiah, and to give the Christ and his mother the support of a man, who should be, according to the law, the husband of one and the father of the other. The bride and bridegroom lived as brother and sister, according to the discreet but direct expression of the Gospel, "And he knew her not."[2]

Joseph understood the part that he was to take in the birth of Jesus; he felt himself the guardian of two things alike sacred and weak, the virginity of his wife and the childhood of him who should be born of her.

Noble and gentle, this simple workman was to have the glory of passing among the Jews as the father of the Nazarene; he was to remain a model of self-denial, devotion, and fidelity; his name was to be united to the two most beloved names on earth, those of Mary and of Jesus; the Christian Church was never to separate them in her worship; in the midst of her trials, throughout the ages, overwhelmed by her human weakness, inheritor of the infirmities of Christ, whose burthen God has laid upon her, she was to lift her eyes towards this chosen man, and to call him her invisible protector.

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[1] See Appendix B: *Marriage among the Jews.*

[2] Matthew i. 25.

The days passed on; and the expectation was great at Nazareth in the house of Joseph the carpenter. The calm narrative of the Gospels does not give us the smallest detail; but those who know a mother's heart understand the divine emotions of the Virgin on the eve of giving birth to the Christ. Earthly mothers are troubled in their vague dreams and look forward with anxiety to the mysterious future; the mother of Jesus had infinite hopes, of which nothing could diminish the fulness nor trouble the serenity.

CHAPTER III.

THE EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS FROM HIS BIRTH TO THE RETURN FROM EGYPT.

A NEW event in the history of Judaea, towards the years 747-749 of Rome, put in motion the whole population of Herod's little kingdom, the eastern provinces, and the various states tributary to the empire.[1]

Augustus had received from the senate the renewal of his imperial office for ten years. He had reached the end of the first five, and had numbered the Roman citizens, even in those towns which had civil rights, as Antioch, Berytus in Syria, and Tarsus in Cilicia. For the third time the doors of the temple of Janus had been closed ; never had there been more complete and universal peace in the empire. The master of the world took advantage of this, made his inventory like any wealthy proprietor, and as a wise farmer or steward measured his lands, numbered his subjects and allies, regulated the calendar, and noted his revenues in an account book, some fragments of which are still extant. He ordered a census of all the inhabitants of the provinces and of allied or vassal kingdoms ; Judaea, under the rule of Herod, was subject to this imperial edict.

Attempts have been made to deny this fact. Criticism has done all in its power to convict St. Luke of anachronism,[2] the only author who has mentioned the census of the provinces and Judaea; but an impartial historian cannot follow those who dispute the witness of the third Gospel.[1]

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[1] See Appendix A : *General Chronology of the Life of Jesus*, sec. 1, *The Census under Quirinus.*

[2] Luke ii. 12.

The people of Herod was numbered. The subservient king, whose policy never omitted any occasion of flattering Augustus, took good care not to disobey the will of his master: an order was given to all the Jews to enrol themselves, each in his own city, and to take an oath of fidelity to Caesar and the King.[2] This was the occasion of the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, as Joseph belonged to this little town,[3] and legally had to be enrolled there. No doubt both saw the finger of God in the unexpected decree which took them to the very place, where, according to the prophets, the Saviour of Israel should be born. In spite of her advanced pregnancy, in spite of the winter season and the fatigues of a long journey, Mary accompanied Joseph.

The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem is three or four days' journey, taking the direct road across the plain of Jezreel, the mountains of Samaria and Judaea, by Ginaea, Bethulia, Sichem, Lebonah, Bethel, Tel-el-Fûl, Jerusalem, and the plain of Rephaim. It was the constant caravan route; ordinary people travelled on foot, but it is rare in Judaea not to find an ass with each family; the indefatigable and docile animal lives on little, it is at once the hackney and the beast of burthen for the poor.

A halt was made near a well, beside the road, under the shade of some tree; or at sunset, in the rainy season, at the entrance to the villages, in the caravanserai which served as a shelter to travellers and their beasts; at dawn the journey was resumed, the travellers singing psalms which spoke of Jerusalem and the house of Jehovah; the end of the journey was reached by easy stages. Thus it was that Joseph and Mary travelled, together with those whom the edict of Augustus brought, as it did them, to Bethlehem or some other town of Judah.

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[1] See Appendix A, sec. 1.

[2] *Antiq.* xvii. 2-4.

[3] Luke i. 27.

Bethlehem[1] lies two leagues to the south of Jerusalem, above the plain of Rephaim, in the very heart of the mountains of Judaea. It occupies the summit of two hills, joined one to the other in form of a crescent; deep valleys isolate it on all sides; that on the south, the most fertile, the Wady-el-Karroubeh, between the two points of the crescent, is a steep slope, so that the walls of the terraces made to bank up the soil give it the aspect of a vast and verdant amphitheatre, covered with vines, olives, and figs, with almond and carob trees. The horizon, narrowed to the north and west by the mountains, opens magnificently to the south and east. There was the cornfield where Ruth the Moabitess went to glean, and hard by the little hill, with the village of Beit-Saour, was the threshing-floor of Boaz. Further is the desert of Judaea with its sandy hills, like a mass of grey cinders. The sun shines upon this barren scene, but nothing grows there. Behind, in a basin over which rise, as a rampart, the blue and violet masses of the hills of Moab, the Dead Sea hides its blue waters. To the south a lonely mountain raises its cone: Herodion, where the old king Herod desired to be buried and to sleep his eternal sleep.

Such is the little country which saw the birth of David, and to which his descendants were now hastening. The houses were full of people, the village khan, or inn, was full. When Mary and Joseph came, there was no room for them. They had to find shelter in a neighbouring cave, one of the hollows so often found in Palestine, half way up the side of a chalk hill. This was called the manger, or stable; it was at the extremity of the place, on the point looking towards Hebron, and was used as a shelter for cattle. Here the two homeless travellers betook themselves, and in that mean place was born the Son of David, whom the angel had announced to his mother as the Holy One, the Son of God, the Saviour, and the heir of an eternal throne. This fact, the most important in history, is related by the evangelist in a few simple and sublime words as if he were speaking of the lowest of the Bethlehemites:

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[1] In Hebrew *Beth-Lehem*, "The House of Bread."

"And so it was that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."[1]

She who had conceived as a virgin brought forth as a virgin; the Gospel implies that she did not know either the weakness or the prostration of our mothers. She herself received the child and laid him to rest in the make-shift cradle. Christian faith kneels for ever before this woman and the child upon her breast; it has learned, in gazing on them, gentleness, poverty, and sacrifice; it has constructed ever new visions of that ineffable scene, without tiring, and without exhausting its beauty, its power, or its charm.

This happened on a December night, in the month of Tebeth, according to the Jewish calendar, unknown by anyone, without other witness than Mary and Joseph. The little town lay asleep, unsuspecting the birth of him, who, rather than David, was to render it immortal. But the Spirit of God was fully poured out on this cave and the neglected cradle; and was to draw thither the elect. All the initiative is from God: they whom he enlightens, see; they whom he calls, hear; they whom he does not touch, stay dead in their ignorance and darkness.

At the foot of Bethlehem, a little beyond Beit-Saour, in

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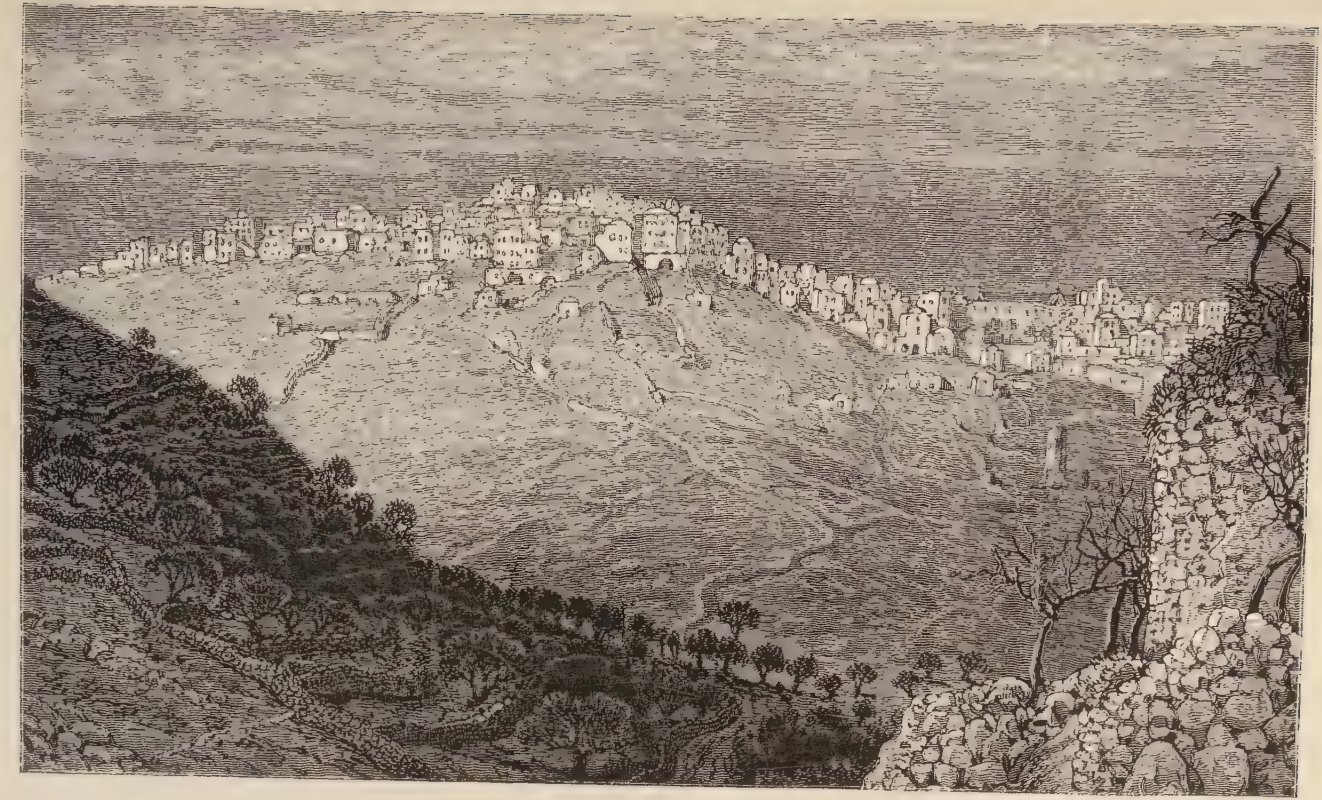
[1] Luke ii. 6-7.



BETHLEHEM, FROM THE SOUTHWEST.

the very plain where Boaz once had fields of wheat and barley, and where Ruth had come to glean, shepherds were keeping their flocks. Shepherds, in the East, represent the lowest class of the agricultural population; they are the servants of servants. The farmer does no work; he has his labourers, workmen, and shepherds. They may be seen at the present day, their head covered with a long black veil, a sheepskin on their shoulders, their feet either naked or shod with sandals, a staff of oak or sycamore in their hand, and they watch from dark to dawn, seated on some rock, round large fires. The earth, sown later in the year, is covered, from the first rains, with grass and flowers, and the flocks live on this early herbage. While the shepherds of Beit-Saour watched their flocks by night, "Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."[1]

The unseen world thrilled at the birth of Jesus. Nothing is accomplished here below but what is decreed on high; terrestrial phenomena are the effects of heavenly and impenetrable causes; all the future, all the mystery of this cradle, were in the two words which were to fill space and time: Glory and Peace; glory to God, peace to man. Henceforward the earth, which knew not God, had a Son who was to teach us his name and establish his kingdom: mankind, given over to the brute law of destruction in her struggle for existence, was to know the law of peace, because she would be ruled by the law of love.

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[1] Luke ii. 9-14.

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"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child."[1]

Simple souls whom God enlightens see far: they foresee what the sages with all their philosophy are unable to understand. Faith alone knows God and his designs; if reason discusses them they escape and blind it; if it determine to bend them to its own needs and narrow formulae, it results often in denying them, and generally in disfiguring or minimising them.

The shepherds returned to their flocks and told the wondrous tale of what they had seen, glorifying and praising God. It does not seem, however, that the testimony of these poor people either stirred Bethlehem or troubled the peaceful lowliness of Jesus' cradle: he remained unknown with his mother and Joseph, but Mary kept all these sayings in her heart; like all mothers, she made her memories a treasure, a sort of inward book, which she read over and over tenderly.

The field of the shepherds is still there; flocks feed in winter under the olives, as in the days of Jesus, in the fields where the grass still grows green, and the anemones flower. Worship has never left the place where shone the brightness of the birthday dawn of Christ. On Christmas evening the people of Bethlehem flock to the church of St. Helena, of which only the ruins remain, and in its desolate crypt they pray to the shepherds of Beit-Saour, their ancestors, who were the first apostles. Clad in their long white veils, seated in groups on the broken walls, beneath the shade of the circling olives, the women, seen from afar, recall the mysterious beings who heralded the advent of Jesus. The crowd has an air of cheerfulness and calm, which harmonizes well with the memories of which the plain is full; and with that Eastern light which colours the whole and gives to the sterile rock itself an appearance of richness and of life.

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[1] Luke ii. 15-17.

After eight days the child, according to the law of Moses,[1] was circumcised in the same house which sheltered the humble strangers. To all appearance their family festival was like those of the very poorest people; all was done simply and quietly, there was nothing extraordinary except the prophetic name given to the infant, and even that of Jesus might seem common, for other children bore it. It would have its divine meaning in Jesus only to the eyes of faith, in the souls of the father and mother.

The first-born of every living creature, among the Jews, was offered to God;[2] and in order to redeem it, five shekels of Jewish money, or an hundred pence, were paid. Thirty-three days after circumcision, the woman who had given birth went to the Temple for her purification; if rich, she brought a lamb for sacrifice; if poor, a pair of doves.[3] In obedience to this Mosaic law, Mary and Joseph came from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, on the appointed day, taking Jesus with them. They presented themselves in the Court of the Women, before the Gate of Nicanor, at the foot of the steps where was the entry to the Court of the Priests, in front of the Altar of Burnt Offerings. They gave the five pieces, and Mary handed over to the priest two doves.

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[1] Levit. xii. 3.

[2] Exod. xiii. 2-12; Numb. xviii. 15-16.

[3] Levit. xii. 4-8.

NAZARETH COLLEGE

An unexpected and interesting event then happened. The courts and porches of the Temple, as are the mosques at present, were filled at the hours of sacrifice and prayer by a crowd who came to sacrifice, to bring their offerings, to perform their ablutions, and to recite the Geüllah, or prayer of redemption.

Among the Jews who asked of God that they might see the day of the Messiah and of the Life of future generations, and who, kneeling before the altar of offerings, saw Mary give her son to the priest, was an old man named Simeon. The Spirit of God had led him to the Temple at the very moment when Jesus was presented. He lived in Jerusalem, and belonged to that pious class who lived in faith and the fear of God, and made his constant prayer that he might see the consolation of Israel. During his long life he had seen the earthly fortunes of his land decline; he was among those saddened by the reign of Herod, with its heathen impieties, but nothing could subdue in him the hope of deliverance. He was the type of ardent and serene faith. Old age is too often complaining and discouraged, but under his white hair he kept the trust of young souls; he did not grieve, but waited. God spoke to his heart; a secret voice told him that the hour of Israel's salvation was at hand, and that he should not die until his eyes had seen the Lord's Anointed.[1] A sudden illumination made known to him that this Saviour was the very child whom a poor woman was presenting to the priest; he took him in his arms, and, like Zacharias, the old man too became a prophet:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."[2]

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[1] Luke ii. 26, &c.

[2] Luke ii. 28-32.

These sublime words have entered deeply into the Christian conscience, as the immortal expression of the joy of hopeful men who see at last the good in which they have believed with the perseverance of unconquerable faith.

The parents of Jesus wondered to hear him thus speak of their child. "Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."[1]

This prophecy of the sad destiny of Jesus, and the sufferings of his mother, was sadly verified. The public life of the Saviour was indeed to be a warfare without a truce, and his life beyond the tomb, in the Church founded by him in the midst of this distracted world, is a continual Calvary. To-day, as yesterday, and as he will be to-morrow, Christ is "a sign which shall be spoken against." All must be for him or against him; he attracts or repels: he forces consciences to declare themselves. When words from a human mouth thus penetrate through the ages, throwing so clear a light, they reveal their origin: it is not man, but the Spirit of God who speaks. The voice of Simeon found more than one echo among those who went and came in the courts of the Temple; the emotion of the old man could not but make an impression on them.

There was also there a woman of great piety, called "Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about four-score and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."[2]

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[1] Luke ii. 34.
[2] Luke ii. 36-38.

But it does not seem that this emotion went beyond the few initiated on whom God sent the first rays of the dawning Christ.

No rumour circulated among the people of Jerusalem, nothing stirred the palace of Herod and alarmed the suspicious tyrant; the chiefs of the nation did not even notice what had passed in the Temple; elders and high priests, Pharisees and patriots, dreamt of a future very different from that foreshadowed in an old man's prophecy over the head of an unknown babe.

When their religious duties were accomplished, Joseph and Mary quitted Jerusalem and returned with Jesus into their own land, to Nazareth in Galilee.[1] It was then in the month Shebat, in the first days of February. A project, of which we see clear traces,[2] had little by little ripened in the mind of Joseph. Faithful to his mission of watching over the child which God had entrusted to him, he wished to treat him in accordance with his Messianic destiny. A prophet, the expected Saviour, the Messiah, should live and act in the kingdom of Judah.

"Salvation is of the Jews," said Jesus, later, to the Samaritan woman.[3] Popular opinion, even among pious Israelites, did not admit that the messenger of God, who was to be the glory and salvation of the people, would extend his work beyond the land of Judah, far from the national sanctuary to which all the Jews flocked from the four corners of the world, and where the God of Israel dwelt in his own home.

Joseph remained with his family in the midst of that heathen Galilee of which the best Jews asked: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"[4] though there was nothing to detain him there. He had resolved to live in Judaea, near Bethlehem, from which his family came, and which must have seemed to him destined for the growth as for the birth of the Messiah. Joseph's reception there, after the birth of Jesus, by the shepherds of the country and their masters, encouraged him in his design, and this no doubt as his motive, a short time after his return to Nazareth, in making a new journey to Bethlehem, where he intended to dwell. So, too, when he brought back the child and his mother from Egypt, he did not think of returning to Nazareth, but to Bethlehem, and it needed a command of God to change his intention. Nazareth was predestined to conceal the Christ until his public life began.

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[1] Luke ii. 39.

[2] Matt. ii. 22.

[3] John iv. 22.

[4] John i. 46.

In this second sojourn, and probably towards the end of Adar (February and March), some time before the Passover of the year 750, several events took place, of which only the first Gospel preserves the memory, and these throw a new light, full of mystery and grandeur, on the infancy of Jesus.

The religious expectations of the Jews in regard to the future of their race, that the Messiah was to bear sway over the world, were not confined within the limits of the little nation, but had penetrated Paganism and the East, giving a ray of hope to minds which had lost faith in Imperial Rome; these expectations were in the air; poets, historians, philosophers, priests, and astrologers, all dealt with them when they made researches into the future.

In a land which the Gospel does not specify, but which can only be Chaldaea, Mesopotamia, Persia, or Arabia Petraea, for these are the countries described in Scripture under the vague name of the East, wise men, who sought in the book of the stars the secrets of the future, Magi, as we call them, saw one day a new star in the sky,[1] whether it were a meteor, a star properly so called, or a comet.

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[1] See Appendix A: *General Chronology of the Life of Jesus*, § 2, *The Star of the Magi.*

Struck with this phenomenon, they examined the traditions of their elders and masters, and, illuminated no doubt by divine light, they recognised the sign of the great ruler promised to Judaea. The Book of Daniel, in which was marked the succession of empires, and the time computed wherein the Son of Man was to come, could not be unknown to them. They were themselves perhaps descended from Balaam, the heathen prophet who had announced that a Star would arise from Jacob, and a Sceptre from the midst of Israel.[1]

Three among them left their country and took the road to Jerusalem ; where their rich and gorgeous caravan excited attention. They asked on all sides, and without throwing any doubt on the event which, according to them, must have been fulfilled, they went about, saying everywhere : "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."[2] The words of these strangers came to the ears of Herod ; the king was troubled, and Jerusalem was disturbed, where the hope of the Deliverer always found some eager souls. Thus disquieted, Herod called together the heads of religion and the doctors, and enquired of them where Christ should be born. They all answered : "In Bethlehem of Judaea." The Scriptures were plain, the tradition unanimous, and the prophet had said distinctly : "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."[3]

The old king, thus warned, "privily called the wise men, and enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared, and he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search

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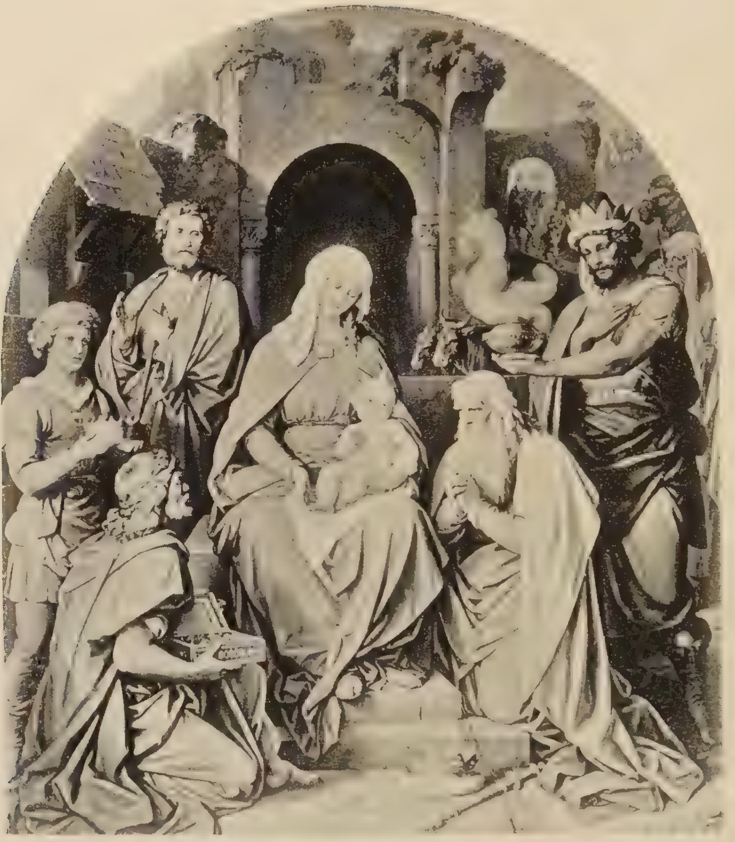
[1] Numbers xxiv. 17.

[2] Matt. ii. 2.

[3] Micah. v. 2.



THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS.

From the Painting by C. C. Pfannschmidt.

diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also."[1]

It does not seem that the Magi understood the secret plot hidden under the eager words of Herod. No doubt they were ignorant of the history of this ambitious ruler who himself wished to play the part of Messiah, and who shrank from no crime to put down those who might insult his jealous royalty.

Having heard the king, they departed, and they had no sooner left Jerusalem than the star which they had seen in the east reappeared. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy; and, lo, the star went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

No doubt there is more here than Oriental ceremony; the sages who came from far were lighted by another light than that of an empty astrology; the star was a symbol of the brightness of God which shines in the conscience, and of the inspiration which leads souls to eternal truth. The Magi adored in this child, born but yesterday, no future conqueror; they saw in him Emmanuel, the true Christ, laid in a poor cradle; enlightened by the Spirit, they believed and adored. No words have come down to us declaring their faith; but their presents had a deep meaning: they offered gold to the king of the age to come, incense to the priest, myrrh to the victim, who, by his death, was to found an eternal Kingdom and priesthood among men.

The sons of Balaam prophesied better than their ancestor, and opened the road to the Gentiles; mankind has followed them in crowds, and after their example has laid at the feet of Christ gold, incense, and myrrh ; has unceasingly adored, prayed, and suffered with him, and loved him even unto martyrdom.

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[1] Matt. ii. 8.

Herod awaited the return of the Magi ; and they, when they had discovered what they sought, hesitated to inform the king, whose perfidious designs they perceived. A dream, wherein they recognised the will of God, having decided them not to return to him, they departed to their own country by another way, probably by the south of the Dead Sea.

The visit of these religious sheiks, their munificence, their homage, their faith, must have reflected some glory on the poor dwelling of Joseph, and caused wonder that strangers so richly accompanied had come so far to see a child of the people. In the East all takes place openly ; rumours would run from house to house through the little town of Bethlehem ; no doubt the names of Messiah and Saviour were on every lip, and Joseph must have been somewhat fearful ; for the cruelty and craft of Herod were known to all the Jews.

Indeed, a storm was about to burst. Surprised that the Magi did not return, and feeling his schemes outwitted, Herod was furious. With the soul of a courtier, base and cringing before his masters, the Romans, he was imperious and harsh towards his subjects. Anger was one of the vices of this mistrustful nature ; it could only grow calm in satiety, and was only satiated in blood. He employed slaughter rather than banishment ; when any threatened or attacked his power, he answered by death. Murder was the means by which he reigned.

Scarcely had he mounted the throne when he asked Antony to sanction the execution of Antigonus, whom he had conquered ; and Antigonus was beheaded.[1] He put to death all the members of the Sanhedrin who, during the siege of Jerusalem, had taken part against him and his Roman allies; Aristobulus, his brother-in-law, the son of Alexandra, was drowned by his orders in a bath at Jericho; he gave over to the executioner, under a false pretence of treason, old Hyrcanus, the last of the Asmonaeans;[1] he unjustly suspected Mariamne, one of his wives, and she had to die. The intrigues of Pheroras and Salome aroused his suspicion in regard to his two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus: he ordered them to be strangled.[2] As he grew old he became more cruel and stern; the Pharisees, exasperated by his irreligious and anti-national policy, plotted a revolution; he seized the two chiefs, Judas and Matthias, and had them burnt alive.[3]

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[1] *Antiq.* xv I.

When he saw that all Jerusalem was moved by the thought of a Deliverer who was born, the old despot at once resolved to seize and put him to death. But his satellites tried in vain to discover the child. Bethlehem was the object of secret search; the violence of Herod grew with failure; he did not shrink from radical and revolting measures. He who had marked by murder almost every year of his reign, who just before his death caused the murder of his own son; who, when he saw his end approaching, and believing that none would lament at his funeral, ordered the massacre of the principal generals in the district of Jericho; now commanded the massacre of all the children at the breast in Bethlehem and the country round about. He was the typical example of an angry and ferocious tyrant. The hill where Rachel had been buried was stained with blood and wet with tears; the cries of the mothers filled the valleys. It is necessary to have seen Eastern mourning, to have heard the cries and sobs round newly-opened graves, in order to imagine the distress of the women who refused to be comforted because their children were not. Herod, after the murder of the sucklings of Bethlehem, might sleep in peace; he thought he had stifled in blood the increasing hopes of the people; but he was deceived.

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[1] *Antiq.* xv. 9.
[2] *Antiq.* xv. 2.
[3] *Antiq.* xvii. 6.

Herod succeeded only in tracing a bloody aureole round the cradle of Jesus; who was thus escorted by a spotless band of martyrs. Others by thousands were to follow these slaughtered innocents; the path of Christ across humanity is a way of blood; all who would follow the Crucified are devoted, like him, to deadly persecution in this world, where no one has been more opposed than God himself.

Jesus escaped from the wrath of Herod; for after the wise men had departed, Joseph was warned of God. The same voice which had before spoken to him, in a dream, on the eve of his marriage, now spoke again: "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt."[1] The Gospel tells us nothing of the incidents of this long journey, nor in what part of Egypt the fugitives abode. The only detail they give us is about the length of the sojourn: "They remained until the death of Herod." Legend, on the other hand, is extremely fanciful, and the apocryphal Gospels are full of marvels during the exile of the child Jesus. Wild beasts, lions and panthers, became gentle as lambs before him, palm-trees bowed as he passed; flowers sprang where he trod, wells spouted forth in the desert to slake his thirst, roads grew shorter and distances were as nothing; the idols broke as he drew near, the devils fled, the possessed were freed, and the Child-God multiplied wonders around him which betrayed his Godhead.

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[1] Matt. ii. 13.

History cannot accept these strange tales, and the Church has never sanctioned them. Ancient traditions, still current in the Coptic Church in Egypt, tell us that the holy family halted under the sycamores of Heliopolis, near the well of Matarea, and dwelt at first at the entry of Memphis, in old Cairo. There is still to be seen there a very ancient church, built in memory of the abode of Jesus; the Coptic Christians worship there, and do not fail to show visitors to the crypt the three arcades sacred to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

The flight into Egypt not only saved the threatened life of Jesus, but began to spread around and over him the silence and peace which were never again to be broken until the day of his great strife. The star of the wise men disappeared, the voices of the prophets were still, heaven was veiled, the humble family lost in the crowd; the father and mother alone kept, as a hidden treasure, the mystery of Jesus.

The following year, 750-751, Herod died; but Joseph, established with his own people in the Jewish colony of Memphis, was in no haste to return to Judaea. Warned by inspiration to go back to the land of Israel, he left Egypt with the child and his mother; but learning that Archelaus, the new king of Judaea, continued the oppressive and impious policy of his father,[1] he judged it prudent not to remain there.

Galilee and Peraea were better ruled; they had as their tetrarch Antipas,[2] another son of Herod. This prince, who loved luxury, and was, moreover, of a kindly nature, had undertaken to build two towns, Tiberias and Julias, and he endeavoured, by the gentleness and liberality of his government, by the splendour of public edifices and many material advantages, to draw to himself the greatest possible number of inhabitants from the neighbouring provinces.

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[1] *Antiq.* xvii. 9.

[2] *Antiq.* xvii. 11.

It was revealed to Joseph in a dream that he was to retire to Galilee; he returned therefore to Nazareth, where he took up his abode. In this little province, so despised by the Jews that it was proverbially incapable of producing anything good, Jesus grew, unknown. He was to be called a Nazarene, a name[1] recalling an idea and expression familiar to the prophets when they spoke of the Messiah: "Behold the man," said Zechariah, "whose name is The Branch;"[2] and Jeremiah had already said: "I will raise up to David a righteous Branch,"[3] and Isaiah, first of all, had seen "A Branch grow out of the roots of Jesse."[4]

And, indeed, not out of the roots of Jesse and David, but out of the roots of the human race, no Branch ever flourished like unto Jesus of Nazareth.[5]

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[1] In Hebrew, *Netzer*; branch, flower.

[2] Zechariah vi. 12.

[3] Jeremiah xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15.

[4] Isaiah xi. 1.

[5] The word used by Jeremiah and Zechariah is not *Netzer*, but *Tzemach;* but the meaning is the same.

CHAPTER IV.

HISTORICAL NATURE OF THE MIRACULOUS NARRATIVES OF THE BIRTH AND INFANCY OF JESUS.

THE history of the birth of Jesus has a supernatural character which nothing can weaken or disguise. The personal intervention of God is at once its crown and support. The Divine Spirit took the sovereign initiative, revealed himself under different ways to the consciences of the elect, called them, commanded them, moved them at his pleasure, and they freely did his will.

He who, in this unique instant of history, chooses to see only the play of forces of nature and mankind, will never penetrate the mystery of Christ; for he forgets God, the supreme motive force which subdues nature and mankind to associate them with his designs.

All the opponents of the miraculous, partisans of exclusive science; rationalists, pantheists, materialists, positivists, or sceptics, strike out of history and treat as legends or poetical narratives the Gospel of the Infancy, as St. Matthew and St. Luke have delivered it to us; they see in these narratives only an ordinary event, embellished by sentiment and imagination, like all births of illustrious men in ancient times. The only historic fact, according to their system, can be stated in one line: Jesus was born in Palestine, in the reign of Augustus.

The most attentive and conscientious examination of the works in which this criticism is formulated cannot discover the least historical argument against the events which I have narrated according to original documents. The opposition which they raise is at bottom purely dogmatic. The documents suppose the personal and supernatual intervention of God, and, therefore, they find no favour in the presence of philosophic systems which suppress this intervention. Such a criticism has exactly the value of the systems which support it; now, these systems, in spite of favourable opinions, have no right to present themselves as the expression of the truth, for they can be convicted of error by reason itself; and I have always wondered how historians, whose duty it is to record duly-attested facts, can warp them so violently to their theories. This is surely to reverse the parts; a fact resting on documents is not open to discussion, while the theory is in a debatable land; our philosophy cannot make facts to order, but it should be based on existing facts.

The only fact of history against which reason can be invoked with success is one implying contradiction, or violating the principle of causality; a fact inconceivable and without a cause is repugnant to us; it is not, and it cannot be. Philosophers who have called the Gospel narratives absurd have only judged them from the point of view of their systems, and not according to the essential and evident first principles of human reason. We must appeal to incorruptible reason against the tyranny of this criticism, so narrow, arbitrary, and violent, which falsifies history.

In order that miracles may rightly take their place in history, they must be either conceivable, or be supported by trustworthy witnesses. Now these are conceivable, since they have their sufficient reason in the power, wisdom, and goodness of God; the great point is whether they are certified by competent witnesses who attest them with conscientious sincerity.

No one can dispute the historic authority of the third Gospel,[1] to which we owe all the details of the conception and birth of Jesus. St. Luke, in his Prologue, explains his design in formal terms.[2] He does not collect vague and legendary traditions, with his eyes shut; but points out facts with care, which he has traced accurately from their very beginning, that he may write them in order, and teach Theophilus the truth of those things in which he had already been instructed. It cannot be supposed that this careful and conscientious writer deceived, or took advantage of the good faith of Theophilus and his other readers, by mixing fanciful, poetical, and legendary narratives with the real history. No impartial critic would maintain his right to reject such testimony and to deny the facts, for the simple reason that they overpassed the narrow circle of his own conceptions. A system of philosophy is not reason itself, but subject to controversy and may be erroneous; while reason, in its fundamental principles, is infallible. The history of the birth of Jesus, according to the Gospels, may contradict a system; but in it there is nothing which reason in its essential principles, is unable to receive.

Some critics have tried to throw doubt on the authenticity of the two first chapters of St. Luke, but these have no true standing-point. Those chapters were announced in the Prologue: "I have followed all with care from the very beginning," wrote the author,[3] and they are in the earliest versions, as in the most ancient MSS. It is true that Marcion rejected them in the middle of the second century. He considered Christ a pure "Æon," superior to all the vicissitudes of birth, pain, and death, having only the appearance of humanity; therefore St. Justin, Tertullian, and Epiphanius accused Marcion of mutilating St. Luke. It is true, moreover, that the songs of Mary,[1] Zacharias,[2] and Simeon,[3] are full of Hebraisms, and offer certain features of a Judaizing spirit, little in harmony with the Pauline character of the Gospel; but these features are rather unexpected proofs of authenticity, for they disclose the private sources by whose aid the author has edited the facts of half a century earlier, which were noted down under the feeling of the events themselves. The Jews who were contemporaries of St. Luke no longer spoke and thought as pious families had done in the time of Zacharias and Simeon.

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[1] See Introduction, p. xvi., &c.

[2] Luke i. 3, 4.

[3] Luke i. 3.

Moreover, St. Luke was well situated for obtaining information about the Gospel history. We know from the Acts his intimate relations with St. Paul, his sojourn at Antioch, his own city, where he knew Barnabas, and at Caesarea, where he received the hospitality of Philip the Deacon; and not to speak of his journey to Jerusalem, where he visited the apostles, it is evident that he must have known the mother of Jesus and the family of John the Baptist. Such was the source from which he drew the precious details he has handed down to us.

Among these witnesses was one surpassing all others, Mary the mother of Jesus. According to St. Luke,[4] she kept in her heart the words she had heard, and the scenes in which she played the principal part. No one can believe that during the life or after the death of her Son, she kept her lips sealed, refusing to communicate to the disciples, her friends, the mysteries with which she had been associated. In her discretion, so delicately referred to by St. Luke, she knew indeed how to await the hour of God; but when this hour had come she spoke, and in the third Gospel we have her own testimony.

[1] Luke i. 46, &c.
[2] Luke i. 68, &c.
[3] Luke ii. 29, &c.
[4] Luke ii. 19, 51.

If legends without historic authority, narratives inspired by the imagination and sentiment of the disciples, had formed around the birth of Jesus, his cradle and his childhood, it is not to be believed that no protest would have been raised and that the mother of Christ became, by her silence, the accomplice of these myths and poetic falsehoods.

We must, however, draw attention to the sect of the Ebionites, in the bosom of the primitive Church, Jewish Christians, obstinate adversaries of the new spirit of the Gospel, firm adherents of Jewish observances, slaves of the letter which kills, irreconcilable enemies of St. Paul, whose mission they opposed and whose anti-legal doctrine they abhorred. The Ebionites denied the conception and miraculous birth of Christ; but their denial has only given more weight to St. Luke's narrative, whose express intention it was to declare, against all opponents, the truth of these divine facts.

Beyond them only a single contradiction arose, in the ancient world, against the Gospel history of the birth of Jesus: an objection arising from the hate which ceaselessly pursued the work of Christ,[1] an outrage against the purity of the cradle of Jesus; this objection and outrage were repeated by Celsus,[2] and they do not deserve the honour of a refutation from any high-minded person. The sanctity of the Gospel protests against so odious a calumny. We have seen it reappear in Germany in this century in several writers.[3] A French Jew[4] has dared to reproduce it without having succeeded any more than others in gaining credence for it, so scandalous and arbitrary is it, so improbable and shocking.

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[1] Cf. *Talmud.*

[2] Origen, *Contr. Cels.* i. 30.

[3] Venturini; Barth, *Die natur. Geburt Jes. v. Naz. Histor. bearbeitet.*

[4] Salvador.

It is true that myth and legend sprang up profusely round the birth of Jesus as round the cradle of all those who have made a strong impression on the mind and heart of man; but these creations of fancy and sentiment need time and distance to produce them, when men and things are wrapped in shadow; they shrink from the keen eye of witnesses and grow only on their tombs. If we wish to glean this growth, we must not seek it in the canonical Gospels, but in the many apocryphal writings of the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries.[1]

If we compare these anonymous books with the text of the Gospels, the former are often puerile and absurd, full of marvels and inconceivable things; the other is written quietly, yet precisely and vividly, all is grave and sober, positive and clear, persons are boldly drawn, the situations have nothing in them vague or incoherent, the speeches agree with the speakers; the picture stands out in high relief, full of harmony and originality.

There is nothing to recall the heathen fables of the suspicious intervention of gods and goddesses in the advent of heroes or great men; nothing which denotes the Jewish mind so little open to the idea of virginity. The narrative of the virgin-birth of Jesus can only be explained by the reality; imagination does not thus dream and invent.

It is impossible not to smile at the way in which the mythical school has looked at the formation of all this history. The proceeding is simple and summary; if any occurrence presents a point of contact with the Old Testament, there is the nucleus round which the legend has formed; if, for instance, in Isaiah, there is a virgin who conceives, the word, by "epigenesis," has created the legend of the Annunciation. The Star of Balaam has in the same way given rise to the star of the Magi, thanks to the ingenious comparison of a verse in the book of Numbers,[1] with a verse in a Psalm, saying that the kings of Arabia and Sheba should bring presents to the Deliverer of Israel.[2] The mother of Samuel chanted a hymn of thanks;[3] the mother of Jesus must therefore chant hers, and so on. The Old Testament and mythology are the mine from which legend springs; the pious fancy of the faithful is the artist that shapes it; the Church, at once dupe and accomplice, is the ground in which it is propagated.

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[1] Cf. in Apocryphal Dict., i. 1, Edn. Migne: *The Gospel of the Infancy*, &c.

When there are no points of contact with the Old Testament, these writers search profane history. To explain the presence of the shepherds at the birth of Jesus, we are to remember the Graeco-Roman myths of Romulus and Remus, nurtured by the guardians of the flocks. It is strange that the world has waited for eighteen hundred years to see clearly the meaning of the Gospel narrative of the birth of Jesus. This poetic and mythical explanation inspires no confidence; it comes too late, and has too much the air of an expedient invented to solve the difficulty of those whom miracle offends.

Again, we are unable to get at these narratives in their developments and genesis, nor can we name the authors of those fancies, of which we admire the beauty, the divine meaning, and the ideal freshness; but there is nothing, no document, no fact, always arbitrary and often unlikely hypotheses. The figures of the Old Testament, the Christian sentiment mixed with Messianic hopes, the need of glorifying Christ so loved and lost to sight, this has all that has worked magically on the popular conscience.

The Gospels affirm in several places that the mother of Jesus kept in her heart and pondered the words she had heard, and the scenes she had witnessed: this element has been neglected; it is however essential, and no historian has the right to pass it by. Indeed, it is natural we should see her record in the Gospel narrative. Mothers remember better than any-one else; their tenderness never forgets, all which has to do with the child which they have borne, nursed, and educated, is deeply graven on their souls.

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[1] Numbers xxiv. 17.
[2] Psalm lxxii.
[3] I. Sam. ii. 1.

The mythical school has thus attempted to treat as of no account this sublime history, by lowering it to the level of Greek fables and Hindoo dreams. This school has reminded us that it was told of Plato that he was born of intercourse between the god Apollo and Perictione, his mother; that Romulus was said to have been the son of Mars, and Caesar the descendant of Venus; if God were made man in Christ, a Buddhist sect tells us of the seven incarnations of Krishna; and Sâkya-Muni, the reformer of Brahmanism, became a god, according to the Buddhist sacred books. A virgin goddess too, assisted at his earthly birth, and, at this very day, the chief of the Buddhist hierarchy, at Thibet, is declared to be an incarnate deity. Far from weakening the Gospel history, these comparisons justify it; they bear witness to a universal aspiration which cannot be deceived, for it has God for principle, and wishes inspired by God are the prophecy of what will be. The general tendency of men to make God intervene in the genesis of great minds, found its perfect object only in the genesis of Jesus.

The most moderate among the adversaries of the historical character of the Gospels, troubled by the supernatural with which their pages are full; the intervention of God, the apparition of angels, dreams which reveal truth, and prophetic discourses; have affected to distinguish the matter from the form. The form is only a poetic veil, artistically woven by the first Christians to clothe the idea of the divine nature of Christ Jesus. This dogma, which, according to the teaching and idea of all the apostolic writers, undoubtedly occupies the most important place, has been formulated, according to the critics, at the pleasure of the surroundings and of the time in a way by turns vague or precise, popular or learned, poetic or theological; and here we have the poetic and popular formula. The matter only is important; the form may be considered from an aesthetic point of view, but we must not press it too closely.[1]

This timid system sacrifices to no purpose the historical nature of the facts, the reality concealed under the formula of the dogma; it commits, moreover, a grave error when it sees in this formula a truth which is not necessarily and logically contained in it. Indeed it is not the "divine nature" of Jesus which is taught there, but his "divine origin." Jesus might be God and man without being thus conceived; he might also be thus conceived without being God and man. In truth, according to Catholic theology, he was born of the Holy Ghost and possessed, in the unity of the same person, the nature of God and the nature of man; but these two facts are not necessarily derived one from the other, and therefore we cannot see in the narrative of the first the formula which indicates or expresses the second.

We shall seek in vain in all literature, sacred or profane, a page wherein poetry and history, the ideal and the real, the human and the divine, are raised to a higher pitch or are in more perfect accord. Everything in these narratives holds together; details agree with the general conception to form a complete and beautiful whole. The features furnished by St. Matthew add to the history of St. Luke and enlarge its horizon. The mysterious star seems to indicate that astronomical revolutions, measuring out the life of the universe, are in accord with the transformations of our little world; and these mysterious chiefs, coming from the East, from a heathen land, allow us to suspect that the hopes of a Saviour were not the exclusive patrimony of one race, and that his action might extend to the whole race of man.

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[1] Reuss, *Histoire Evangélique*. Sabatier, *Encyclop. des Sciences religieuses*, art. *Jésus Christ.*

Jesus is the Son of God, but he was born in a stable, like a poor infant; none recognised him but the Jewish shepherds, but all heaven rejoiced over his cradle in the night wherein he was born. For one moment, when the wise men came, the royal town was moved, but scarcely had that earthly glory shone when danger threatened the child, and he was obliged to flee, and the blood of those who were born at the same time flowed in streams upon the land where he was persecuted.

All these contrasts were to continue in the life of Christ and in his work through the ages, in the bosom of the Church founded by him. They reflect and prolong the great and fundamental antithesis in which the mystery of Jesus consists, and which St. John expressed in one sentence, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."[1] Legend knows no such harmony as this; its incoherent dreams not only shock probability, but offend reason; it takes delight in what is arbitrary and allegorical, marvellous and eccentric. In the full tide of paganism it lent to its gods the weakness and passions of men; in the times which have followed Christianity it ascribes to God himself the fancies of the human brain. Put, if you will, in the same rank, the apocryphal Gospels and the mythology of Greeks, Romans, and Hindoos, together with the wonders in the history of Mahomet; but independent criticism cannot thus treat the canonical Gospels and the history of the childhood of Jesus.

The discourses mixed with these facts help to substantiate them and declare their divine character. The spirit of prophecy awoke and took up the great tradition of departed seers, breaking the narrow circle in which Jewish piety was stifling, it passed the barriers of that blind formalism, wherein the doctors and chiefs of religion held thought and religious sentiment enslaved. The ancient promises of God were understood in their grandeur ; the throne of David was to be restored, but the Son of God was to occupy it, in a kingdom without end ; Israel was to be consoled and saved, but those who were sitting in darkness and death, the Gentiles, if left for a while, were not forgotten ; not Israel was to reign, but God, the bowels of whose mercy were to yearn for every creature.

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[1] John i. 14.

The popular conscience was no more able to receive these inspirations, than the conscience of the doctors and priests. All must be blind who do not see there the wonderful sign of the Spirit and of the Word of God. The word of man, however great he be, cannot attain to this sublimity and clear vision, dig for itself a way to the heart of mankind, penetrate the future with such certainty, and grave itself in the memory of men so profoundly, that, after many centuries, we find it still eager and still alive on the lips of those who adore and pray, who suffer, love, and hope. This is an intrinsic mark of historical character which the Gospel alone possesses, and which keeps inviolable, above all suspicion, the pages relating to the childhood of Jesus.

CHAPTER V.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF JESUS. HIS EDUCATION.

THE life of Jesus as a child and youth at Nazareth is comprised in two words: he grew and obeyed;[1] he obeyed his father and mother; he grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. There is nothing extraordinary, nothing marvellous, nothing apparently which transcends the laws of human nature. His physical development was like that of all children, and, from year to year, he showed the intelligence and virtue, the power and charm belonging to his age. No obstacles stood in the way of his perfect growth; when the passions wake they are tumultuous and unruly, so as to trouble the harmony of man's being, but in the soul of Jesus they were duly balanced. Evil, in any form, did not even touch him who was born holy,[2] and in whom dwelt all the fulness of God.[3]

Matter in him was penetrated by the soul which subdued and transfigured it, and the soul by the Spirit of God which filled and rendered it divine. No psychology can take account of the light of God in the soul of Jesus, and science can never comprehend all the beauty of his body as it moved and grew under the rays and impulses of a soul wholly wrapt in the breath and power of the Infinite. He was the ideal child and youth as, later, he was to be the ideal man

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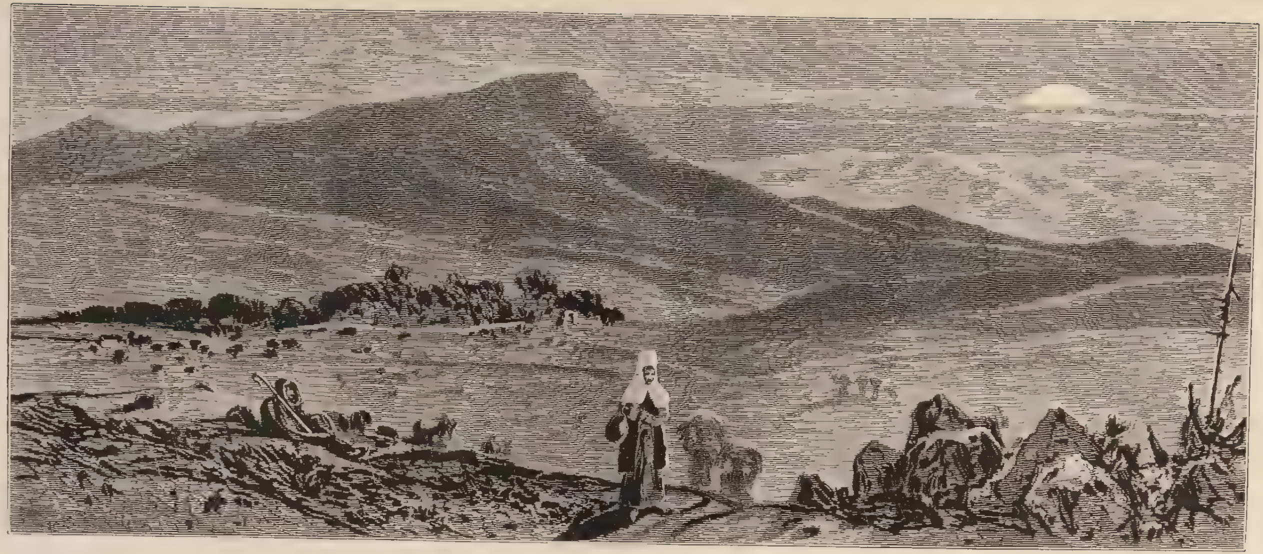
[1] Luke ii. 51, 52.

[2] Luke i. 35.

[3] Coloss. ii. 9.



VIEW OF THE SHEPHERDS' FIELD, FROM BETHLEHEM.

Looking toward the east, the mountains of Moab in the distance.

Between him and the sons of earth there is this difference; the best of us aspire to a perfection which they never attain, he realised its absolute type.[1] The total and personal union of the human and divine natures gave him the intuition of infinite truth, the possession of infinite love, the uninterrupted enjoyment of infinite beauty;[2] but this did not interfere with the development of experimental knowledge in his reason,[3] the progressive exercise of virtue, the effort of the will, the fatigues of the body, labour and pain. These are inseparably united with earthly manhood, which Jesus took on him with all its weakness, its sorrows, and its mortality; his union with God only gave him freedom from sin and imperfection.

The most diverse moods may exist at the same time in the soul, without exclusion and destruction one of the other: intuition is compatible with experimental knowledge, divine joy may be allied with untold anguish, and violent struggle with unalterable calm.

Jesus was brought up, like all the Galilaeans of his age, in the little town of Nazareth. As a child he took part in childish games; as a young man he had to mix with his companions, and live their life; he astonished them by his wisdom, goodness radiated from him, the charm of sweet and humble souls.

Nothing less resembled our modern education than that of a young Israelite, in Judaea, in the time of Herod. Public schools play a large part among us, in taking the children from the paternal home, from the tenth to the twentieth year, to give him over to a master; but the system did not yet exist among the Jews. Jerusalem alone had a popular school which was called "Beth-Hassepher," the House of the Book.

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[1] Cf. Thomas: Summ., 3 P., Qu. xv.
[2] Cf. id. id. 3 P., Qu. xv., art. 10.
[3] Cf. id. id. 3 P., Qu. xii.

Founded a century before Jesus by the Pharisee Simon ben Schetoh,[1] it became the model of those which, about the year 64, were founded in all towns and villages, by order of the high priest Jesus ben Gamala.[2] The Jewish child was educated in his father's house, in the synagogue, and the workshop. In the house he received the counsels of his father and mother ; in the synagogue he learned to read the Torah ; in the workshop he learned a trade.

Domestic education among the Jews was exclusively religious and patriotic, and concentrated on the Law, morals, and history ; its intention was to form the conscience and engrave upon it the Law of God, fidelity to its precepts and love of the nation ; it was honoured and obeyed among this people, which more than any other adhered to tradition. By domestic education, patriotism was kindled in the soul of the child ; from the heart of the father and mother it drew, with the fear of God, the knowledge of the divine commands, and was initiated into the religious spirit of Israel and its great destinies.

Education was imposed on parents as a sacred duty. The first-born child was for them the first-fruits of the father's strength,[3] and a sign of God's blessing ; a family without children seemed to them neglected or accursed ; hence there was a tie between parents and children which has given to Israelitish families a consistency unknown to the Gentiles. The Roman had the right of killing, disinheriting, and abandoning his children ; the Jew was bound by his religion to watch over the greatest interest of the family and the nation, which held their glory to consist in the number and the piety of their descendants.

The Hebrew legislator never ceased to exhort the father to instruct his son, at home, at meals, and in travelling, in the commandments and blessings of God ; and, on the other hand, he ordered children to honour their parents. This precept comes in the Law immediately after the duty towards God; obedience was to be blessed, disobedience punished with death. We may read, in the Proverbs,[1] the exhortation addressed by the Wisdom of God to the child, to hear the instructions of his father and not reject the teaching of his mother. No domestic morality breathes greater tenderness and respect.

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[1] *Talmud Hierosol.*, *Ketouboth*, viii. 11.

[2] *Talmud Babyl.*, *Bababathra*, 21, *a*.

[3] Deut. xxi. 17.

The dwelling in which Jesus grew up was like those of the Arabs in Palestine at the present day. The type of the Oriental house has not changed for centuries; it is square, of brick or stone, the walls are often only of concrete, covered with stiff clay, sun-dried and whitewashed. The roof is a terrace surmounted by a balustrade, and is reached by a movable ladder or a staircase fixed to the wall. There is the guest-chamber, and the place of prayer; and there, during the hot season, a little hut of leaves or reeds is erected for sleeping in at night.

The house has but one or two rooms, and often no other opening than the door; in front is a narrow court, surrounded by a wall of loose stones, or dry faggots. In one of the angles of the court, near the door, is the baking-oven, a little round building of clay, closed by a movable cover; and the pebbles on which the dough is spread form the base.

The furniture is primitive; a few stools, a table, cushions strewed along the wall, mattresses and mats, a chandelier, an oil-lamp in a corner of the wall, a large coffer for linen and clothes, a meal-tub, a few urns, and a basalt mortar for the grain. The chimney, or rather the hearth, is sometimes placed in the middle of the room; at the door of each dwelling is a little oblong box, the "Mezuzzah," enclosing a roll of parchment on which are written two portions of the Law, taken from Deuteronomy.[2]

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[1] Prov. i. 8; iv. 10, et passim.

[2] Deut. vi. 5-19; xi. 13-20

The carpenter's shop was the first and true school of Jesus; there he grew up beside his father and mother, learned of them to read the Scriptures, and heard from their mouth the precepts of the Law and the history of his people. This child, who felt and knew himself to be the Son of the Heavenly Father, deigned to receive from an earthly father and mother the orders and instructions of God, and to be initiated, like all children, into human life and knowledge.[1]

Jesus was the first-born and only son of his mother; those whom the Gospel calls his brothers and sisters, were in fact his maternal cousins, whose father was Cleophas, and their mother, Mary, sister of the mother of Jesus;[2] they were of the same family, the same tribe, the same blood as he, and he lived in their midst. The relations of Jesus do not appear to have been aware of the hopes which rested on his head and shone in secret in the home of Joseph and Mary. After those great manifestations of God, shadow and mystery rested on the predestined youth, while, in submission to his human state, he followed all its laws. Faith alone, illuminated by ineffable memories and the daily spectacle of perfect virtue, showed the parents of Jesus that he was extraordinary and divine.

They recited the Psalms together, praying for the redemption of Israel and the salvation of the nations, and Joseph and Mary must often have looked on the face of Jesus to read therein the designs of God, the stern ways which his wisdom would follow in the accomplishment of the great work. They loved them well, without yet knowing them; God only gives his light at the moment ordained; souls which live in him give themselves up to his Providence, repressing their eager desire, and waiting with calmness till the day of God shall dawn.

But, for us, this life of the holiest of all families, this mystery of Nazareth, remains concealed.

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[1] Cf. Thomas Aqu., Summ. 3 P., Qu. xii., art 3.

[2] Matt. xiii. 55; xxvii. 56. Mark vi. 3; xv. 40

The young Israelite was wont to complete his education in the synagogue, and, from the time of Ezra, each village had its own, often a simple chamber without ornament or architecture, pointing towards the sacred city. In a press concealed by a bright-coloured curtain, to represent the veil of the Temple, the Torah was deposited. A lamp, like those in our churches, was always burning before the roll of parchment on which it was written. In the midst of the hall was the pulpit, from which seven readers, three times every week; the Sabbath, Monday, and Thursday; read passages from the Law, and a portion of the Prophets. Then the reader interpreted, in the Aramaean tongue, the verses which had been read; and the president, or someone appointed by him, recited the final benedictions, to which the people, standing and turning towards the distant Temple, answered "Amen" in a loud voice. On benches covered with mats or cushions, along the walls or around the pulpit, the congregation, their heads covered with the "taleth," and clad in long tasselled cloaks, were seated, praying in a low voice, rocking their bodies and heads in measured time. The women, apart from the men, often stood at the door, their little children in their arms, following the prayers in silence.

Jesus and his relatives were often present in the synagogue of Nazareth; they came there on the Sabbath and the other appointed days; as pious Israelites, they had to pray there in the morning, at midday, and in the evening. Those who wished to read the Law, were accustomed to sit before the press wherein the copies were kept, and the "Hasan" gave them the sacred roll. Probably Jesus came often in his youth to pray there and meditate on the word of God so full of him, and of which he alone was one day to reveal the mystery. Seated in the synagogue, his head veiled, the sacred rolls on his knees, he might read in the Scriptures his own destiny written beforehand by the prophets, might follow the evolution of the plan of God for mankind, to admire the work of salvation, and prepare himself in silence, unknown to all, to accomplish his Father's will.

But no rabbi could claim him as a disciple, he in whom God dwelt could have no master;[1] his only and true master was the living God. We only now and then hear the word of God far off, like a feeble echo, through a thousand noises which often confuse it; Jesus heard it always and without effort, full, vibrating, clear, direct; it was the well-spring of treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in him;[2] it was his own genius.

Syro-Chaldaean was the mother-tongue of Jesus;[3] it does not appear that he spoke Greek. Hellenic culture had not penetrated the Jewish population in Palestine, and in any case the people only felt its influence feebly.

In the public assemblies of the synagogue, Jesus knew also by experience the poverty, the perversions, errors, and empty knowledge of the doctors of his time; he saw the vain-glorious who sought the first places;[4] and heard the narrow and haughty Pharisees. After eighteen hundred years, the Pharisee may be found in the synagogue of modern Jerusalem, just as Jesus saw him; the same arrogant air, the same hard and disdainful eye; he feels himself a being apart; he is the master; he believes that all knowledge is his; he may answer questions, but he has nothing to learn; he holds his Bible as if it were his God, and as though he had the monopoly of God. The earliest impressions of youth are never blotted out; in Jesus, as in us, they help us to comprehend the intentions, the words, and the acts, of riper age.

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[1] Coloss. ii. 9.

[2] Coloss. ii. 3.

[3] Though in the time of Jesus classical Hebrew was a dead language, it was familiar to the Jews. The people spoke Syro-Chaldaean, a dialect which was, to the old Hebrew tongue, what modern is to ancient Greek, and Italian to Latin.

The popular dialect was divided into three branches: the Judaic, nearest to primitive Hebrew; the Samaritan, somewhat mixed with Chaldaean; and the Syriac.

The Galilaeans were distinguished by their accent, which did not pronounce the gutturals.

[4] Matt. xxiii. 6.

The Jew, in his education, did not neglect the worldly and practical side: every Israelite, of whatever rank, had to learn a trade. "On the father lies the task," says the Talmud, "to circumcise his son, to instruct him in the Law, and teach him a craft."[1] In this the Talmud summed up the tradition of Jewish manners. Those who gave no profession to their children neglected a great duty; it is, as one of the Targums says, to teach them to steal;[2] and it sums up all the positive and industrious feeling of the race. The Jew has never known the indolence, laziness, and the gentle resignation arising out of fatalism, which astonishes the European in the fellahs of Palestine. Work is sacred for him, and trade an honour, even among the most illustrious rabbis: Hillel and Aquiba, two of the greatest, were wood-cutters; Rabbi Johanan was a shoemaker; Rabbi Isaac Nanacha a blacksmith. Jesus, the son of a workman, was a carpenter, like Joseph his father; he grew up in the shop and in work. He made, as Justin says, wooden implements, ploughs, yokes, and scales; he aided his father, and lived by the work of his hands as a simple artizan.

The true Master of men was to come from a small workshop. He remained, while waiting till his hour was come, the model of humble men, of those whose name is unknown to history, who live obscure and undiscovered, under the eye of God. The years of their life succeed each other monotonously, all is silent in them; sorrow and joy, work and virtue. The majority of men live thus; and it is not one of the least forces of Christianity that it can present for the imitation of the people a workman-Christ, devoted, in his childhood and youth, to daily labour, like the greater part of men.

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[1] *Tosaphot, in Kidduschin*, ch. i.

[2] *Talmud Babyl., in Kidduschin*, 29.

The workshop, among the Jews, was not in the house ; the tradesmen had their stalls in the bazaar ; the artizan had his bench near his dwelling. The wife took care of the home, where she lived in retirement, while the husband and child went forth to work. She ground the wheat, prepared the food, spun the wool and wove garments, went to draw water from the well and buy her provisions at the market The family assembled at the hours of prayer and at meals ; on Sabbaths and feast-days at the synagogue. These details make the whole external life of the cottage at Nazareth and of the family of Jesus.

We cannot understand his physiognomy and character, if, while we study his childhood and youth, we neglect the natural surroundings in the midst of which he grew. Man is attached to the soil of his birth by ties so strict as always to leave their impress.

We always resemble our native land; our imagination takes the tints of the heaven in which our sight loses itself; the highest are those in which echo profoundest harmonies with the nature in which they develop. A great writer's style reflects the melancholy of the shores by which he dreamed to the sound of the wave ; a man of action recalls the craggy hills among which he was born, and the torrents that leapt from them. Whoever has not long gazed on the heaven of the East, Palestine, the mountains of Nazareth, the Lake of Tiberias, will never understand the outward frame of Jesus, the tone of his thoughts, the images in which he loved to clothe them, and the originality of his parables.

Through long years he read in the country round Nazareth as though in the book of God ; there he admired the anemones, the lilies, the tufts of asphodel,[1] and the fig-tree which gave its first fruit in the spring;[1] there he saw the corn grow white,[2] and the vine pruned in order that it might be more fruitful;[3] there the lost sheep[4] and the flocks brought back to the fold; there he saw the shy jackal gain its hole,[5] the eagles and the vultures gathering to devour their prey;[6] there he saw the sun grow red at morning and evening, a sign of fair weather or of storm,[7] and the torrents come down in flood-time to carry away the ill-built house.[8]

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[1] Matt. vi. 28 ; Luke xii. 27.

We shall seek in vain a corner of the world more tranquil and sweet, more hidden and full of light, more retired and yet more open. If we climb one of the hills which surround the little town, that for example which looks at the present day over the Wady Nabi-Said, the spectacle is almost boundless. On the north are the high mountains of Galilee, and behind them, against the sky, the solitary peak of greater Hermon, always sparkling with snow. To the east Tabor raises its proud summit, and the mountain chain of Ajalon extends its verdant slope. To the south, Little Hermon, the mountains of Gilboa, of Samaria, and, on the extreme horizon the sharp summits of Judaea. Close at hand extends the plain of Esdraelon, in bands of grey and yellow, like a Persian carpet on which the clouds make patches of deep violet. To the west are the blue outlines of Carmel and the sea. The whole world seems to spread out under the eye, and we like to picture Jesus to ourselves on this summit, praying to his heavenly Father, and contemplating the broad land, as the territory which one day he was to conquer and enrich.

The Gospel documents say nothing about the long years of Jesus at Nazareth. St. Luke has characterised their general outline by a few hints; but it was the intention of God that his Christ should remain hidden.

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[1] Song of Solomon ii. 13.
[2] John iv. 35.
[3] John xv. 2.
[4] Luke xv. 4-6; John x. 1, &c.
[5] Matt. viii. 20; Luke ix. 58.
[6] Matt. xxiv. 28; Luke xvii. 37.
[7] Matt. xvi. 3.
[8] Matt. vii. 27; Luke vi. 49.

One incident alone allows us to see what was passing in the soul and conscience of the youthful Jesus. The twelfth year marked a solemn period in the life of the young Israelite; from that age he was treated as a man, he was responsible for his own acts, and ceased his pupilage; he became a member of the community of Israel, and engaged himself to fulfil faithfully the commandments of the Law. The Roman put on the *toga virilis* at the age of fourteen; the young Israelite had already become the son of the Torah; he began to bear the phylacteries on his forehead and arms, in religious ceremonies, according to the precepts of Moses;[1] he had to fast on penitential days; and at the great feasts, the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Jesus had attained the age of twelve. He had been presented by his father in the synagogue at Nazareth, had become a member of the community, and the phylacteries[2] had been given to him, as to all those of his age, on the Sabbath-Tephillin. His parents, like all pious Jews, made each year, at the feast of the Passover, their journey to Jerusalem.[3] He went with them; as his first step in life after his years of childhood, and his first public act of submission to the Law.

These pilgrimages to the Holy City and the Temple formed a feature of Jewish national and religious life. At the three most solemn feasts, long caravans frequented the four roads which led to Jerusalem: that of Egypt by the desert,

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[1] Deut. xi. 18.

[2] These were little parchment bands fastened by straps to the arms and head, with two passages from Deut., vi. 4-5; xi. 1-21; and two others, from Exodus, xiii. 1-10, 11-16.

[3] Luke ii. 41, &c.

Gaza and Hebron; that of Peraea, by the Valley of the Jordan, Jericho, Bethany, and the Mount of Olives; that which came from the west by Joppa; and that of the country of Damascus, the Hauran, Lebanon, and Syria by Sichem.

From all the towns of Judaea and the Holy Land, the smallest villages and the most remote districts, and by every gate, thousands of pilgrims were wont to come. Josephus estimates the crowd which choked the streets and suburbs of Jerusalem at the Passover, at no less than two millions.[1] They chanted psalms upon their march; and had their fixed halting-places; the Galilaeans, who came through Samaria, preferred to stop beyond Sichem, and the well of Jacob, at Ain-el-Haramieh, the last stage before Jerusalem. At this spot the valley closes in, and forms a semicircle; the path merges into the dry bed of a torrent which is only filled after a storm. On one side is a rock from which springs a fountain; on the other, the hill in terraces, like the sides of an amphitheatre: it is a wild and solitary place, and full of melancholy. The pious Israelites often woke the echoes by their songs and their impatient desire to see at last Jerusalem, and the House of the Lord.

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks," they sang, "so panteth my soul after thee, O God. When shall I come to appear before God?"[2]

After a two-hours' march they came at last to Mount Scopus, to a place now called Naschevat, whence the Holy City suddenly appeared like a radiant vision; the Temple with its golden roof covered Mount Moriah; on Zion rose the palace of Herod and those of the high priests; all the domes shone white in the rising sun; sixty towers rose upon the walls, like giant sentinels round the city of the great King Scopus, with one summit crowned by Nabi Samuel, forms a semicircle of rocks and stones, grey and desolate, severely framing the Holy City to the north; the Mount of Olives rises to the east, covered with cypresses, cedars, and other sombre trees; on the horizon to the south, quite close, is the undulating chain of the mountains of Bethlehem, and in the far distance the hills of Moab faded into the sky. The sight of Jerusalem filled the pilgrims with unspeakable emotion, and they chanted, to express it, the Psalm of Degrees, "How goodly are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!"

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[1] Joseph., *Bell. Jud.* vi. 9, 3.

[2] Ps. xlii. 1.

Jesus and the caravan of Nazareth passed by this road at the Passover of 760 or 762. The feast lasted eight days, from the 14th to the 21st of Nisan (April). The approaches to the Temple, the porches, and the courts were encumbered by the multitude which came to pray and offer sacrifice to Jehovah. The priests immolated the victims; the people cried aloud for the redemption of Israel; the doctors, the Pharisees, and the scribes discussed the Law, commented on its precepts, and taught their traditions.

Jerusalem, at that time, was not only the city of worship, but one of the great centres of religious knowledge. Two opposite schools divided men's minds; that of Hillel and that of Shammai; the one, the more tolerant and liberal, exalted the moral portion of the Law, and declared it more important than the ritual; the other, narrow and scrupulous, laid stress upon the letter, and wished to impose it upon all, exaggerating by a thousand details the weary burthen of the Mosaic tradition.

The arrival of rabbis from a distance would increase the animation of the opposing doctors and their disciples; the ardent and bitter discussions, under the Porch of the Gentiles, at "Beth-Midrash," where the masters came together.

Probably at the very place where stands the basilica built by Justinian in honour of the Virgin Mary, occurred the events of which St. Luke preserves the record.[1] The feast was ended; the caravans were quitting Jerusalem; that of the

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[1] Luke ii. 41.

Nazarenes, in which were the parents of Jesus, was on the way towards Samaria. It had arrived at the first stage, Bireh, not far from Bethel, where Jacob had the vision of the mysterious ladder, and where Samuel came every year to judge the people. In the evening Joseph and Mary perceived that Jesus was not with them in the caravan. They returned to Jerusalem seeking him; and, after three days, they found him in the Temple, at the "Beth-Midrash," seated in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, asking them questions, and answering them; and all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

Those who know the manners of the East, and have seen the Jewish synagogues or the Moslem mosques, at the hour of teaching, will not wonder at this scene. A circle is made round the doctors, all sit on mats, listening, asking, answering, by turns; young and old are seated side by side, the teachers and the disciples with their legs crossed, on the same carpet, and all may speak. History does not tell us, but we may easily guess the questions of Jesus and his answers.

He who was to proclaim himself as the Son of God and the expected Messiah, to preach the Sermon on the Mount, to show the emptiness of Jewish observances, to bring to all the Spirit of Salvation, must have showed some ray of the infinite wisdom with which he was filled. If human genius always reveals itself, the divine wisdom of Christ must have done the same. What is really surprising is the shade in which Jesus remained so long voluntarily hidden. And when they saw him thus admired by the most celebrated teachers and by the crowd, his parents "were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"[1]

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[1] Luke ii. 48, 49.

The mind of Jesus is revealed for the first time in this mysterious speech: his whole self was there in its fulness, with his title of divine sonship, his sovereign initiative, his heavenly vocation; his life, in its smallest detail, would be only the accomplishment of this that was spoken in his twelfth year. Neither Mary nor Joseph understood all its depth. Jesus went down with them to Nazareth, where he resumed his humble and laborious existence, waiting for his manifestation, the call of God.

Man is rather carried away by, than masters, his genius, he submits to circumstances rather than directs them, he declares and reveals himself unconsciously; in Jesus all obeyed the will of the Father; for thirty years, except for the renown of this scene under the Porch of the Gentiles, he was to live unknown, his countrymen would hardly notice him, and the Nazarene would only attract attention, perhaps, by the beauty which superhuman grace and charm gave to his person.

Contemporary documents have left us no portrait of Jesus. Some doctors, insisting too much on the letter of a passage in Isaiah describing the persecuted servant of Jehovah,[1] have denied him beauty. If the face of man reflects the invisible soul, Jesus must have been the fairest among the sons of men. The light of God, veiled by the shadow of pain, must have enlightened his brow with a gentle splendour which human art can never paint.

The Greeks, masters of aesthetics, have given to Jesus divine majesty; the Latins, the moving aspect of the Man of Sorrow: he has thus at once the aureole and the nimbus; the aureole of a martyr and the nimbus of a God.

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[1] Isaiah li.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VOCATION OF JESUS.

THE life of every exalted personage is explained by his destiny, and his destiny by his nature and character; but the final word rests with him who guides life, commands destiny, creates nature, and inspires character. The relations between God and his messengers have always some mystery, the more profound as the character is deeper, and the action of God more powerful and vast; they resist all analysis.

In revealing himself his ineffable relation to God, his vocation and nature, his work and person, Jesus sketched his own living and faithful portrait, and explained his life. The mistrustful spirit which criticises such a witness, and lowers all that is transcendent to its own narrow formula, can never understand Jesus, but only disfigure him and travesty him. In order to understand beings who are above us, we must believe in and love them; faith and love have intuitions higher than intellect, however clear-sighted. Among all the disciples of the Master, he who has recorded his most intimate confidences, he who loved him best, has given us the most divine likeness of him.

The soul of man has three centres: God, nature, and humanity; and the greatest of these is God. The more a life is concentrated in him, the stronger it is, and the holier. This world was, for Jesus, the means by which he entered into contact with mankind, his field of action; his true life was neither in the world nor in mankind, but in God.

Man is united to God, as the supreme object of his intelligence and will, by the act of his higher faculties. By knowing and loving him man clings to him; by obeying his law he becomes the servant of God. This union, so full of sweetness and charm, is as accidental and precarious as the ties which form it: knowledge is abstract, love weak and sapped by selfishness, obedience uncertain; the most perfect men fail and fall under the slavery of nature and the woes of mankind.

Christian faith uses a mysterious phrase for the union which binds man to God, in Christ; calling it a substantial and personal union. The human and divine natures were both in him without confusion, hypostatically united in the person of the Word. Jesus was, without metaphor, in the most profound and truest sense, the only Son of God; and thus he is without an equal in mankind.

He was conscious of his divine sonship; in him was no confused sentiment of the divine, such as characterises mystical natures, and by which they vaguely perceive the hidden relation which binds every creature to the infinite cause, it was a luminous and vivid consciousness of the personal God, living and immanent in him. Between God and his human nature was no intermediary; it was the instrument, and God the immediate motor. Every one of his acts had a human and divine character which only one phrase can express: he was the God-Man. Nothing in Jesus denotes or betrays extreme sensibility, the dream of a boundless imagination. All his faculties were duly balanced; and, when he called God his Father, he expressed an inward fact of which he had an intimate assurance. He did not demonstrate it to himself, but saw it; he alone was one with the Father.[1] Moses, the greatest of the servants of God, trembled before the Lord, the terrible Lord whose face none could see and live;[2] Jesus saw him and loved him. The

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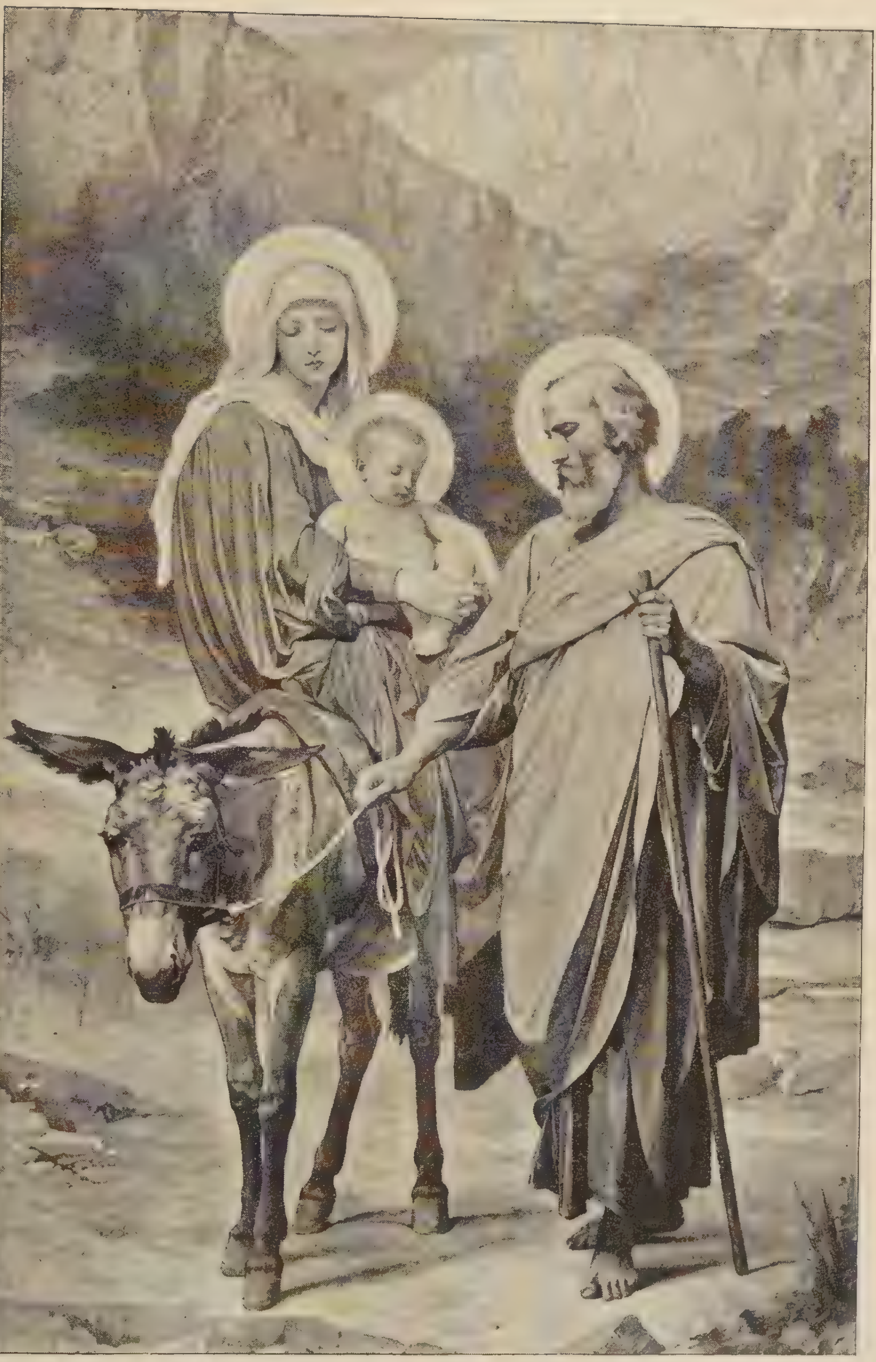
[1] John x. 20.

[2] Exodus xxxiii. 20.



THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

From the Painting by William Bouguereau

prophets were overcome by the word of Jehovah, which fell on them like a thunder-clap; they said: "The Lord hath spoken unto me." Jesus always heard and transmitted the word as his own. The greatest of religious souls have sought God in asceticism and, by painful effort, they feel for a moment his presence in swift ecstasies, from which they soon return; but Jesus possessed God as his own, his nature needed no rapture; it dwelt in God, whom he saw face to face.

He had in himself the Spirit of the very God; he possessed all that an intelligent nature can receive from God. "We saw him," said the beloved disciple after his death, "he was indeed the only Son of God, full of grace and truth."[1]

From this union with the divine nature all his human faculties gained a fulness and harmony which have made of him the perfect type of man. He knew God, as a son knows his father, and he kept his word in himself.[2] In him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.[3] He had the intuition which perceives the Principle of things, and in those phenomena which strike our senses, he read the invisible truths which the human mind has to gain from phenomena by abstraction. No earthly master instructed or formed him, he was taught of God. Therefore ignorance did not limit his thought, nor did error trouble him; in him inspiration was constant, not as, in the prophets, a borrowed and intermittent light but infinite brightness always radiated from the eternal Word.

The will and the affections are seldom properly balanced in a man of great intellectual power. In Jesus all is at the same height; as truth enlightened, so goodness and beauty attracted him; his love was for good as a whole, and his spirit fixed on absolute truth. Between the will of his Father and his own there was constant harmony, in spite of sorrow, the opposition of men, the instinctive revolts of nature, and obstacles of every kind, even of death itself. He knew only the will of his Father, which was his meat;[1] he did nothing of himself;[2] he did not seek his own will, but that which was pleasing to his Father,[3] and he always fulfilled it.[4]

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[1] John i. 14.
[2] John viii.
[3] Coloss. ii.

The best men see the good, and only do it by halves; their ill-ordered powers paralyse them, slacken their course or lead them astray; their proud egoism, in turning them from God, deprives them of his support; Jesus saw the good and realised it without error or failure. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"[5] he asked. Nothing could resist his power; the might of God was in him; and as he obeyed his Father, acting only as his will ordained, he was never deceived. His prayer was always heard; and this confidence gave him the gentleness of one who can do all things. He did no violence, for he knew none; he did what he pleased, but his will was only towards good and life; goodness was his law, life and good flowed from his hands, always open to bless.

Imagination, desire, and passion, which attract the soul powerfully and fix its roots in the earth, which so often trouble our perception of the truth, and assail or interfere with our liberty, all these inferior forces obeyed the will of Jesus, as his will obeyed that of God. Hence the calmness, serenity and gentleness displayed by his harmonious nature. God's light, love, and beauty breathed through his whole being, a divine virtue went out from him.[6] His sensibility was perfect; by it he entered into communion with earth. He loved nature, which spoke to him of the goodness and bounty of his heavenly Father;[7] he asked it for no other joy;

[1] John iv. 34.
[2] John v. 30.
[3] John vi. 38.
[4] John viii. 18.
[5] John viii. 46.
[6] Luke vi. 1, 9; viii. 46.
[7] Matt. vi. 28; xii. 27.

living among men, he chose to know their sorrows, fatigues, compassion, holy wrath against evil, unceasing struggles, faithlessness, treason, torture and the shock of a bloody agony, the dread punishment of death.

He often wept.[1] All human sufferings moved him; but in the innocence of children he found rest and charm. A prophet, seeing him from afar, called him "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."[2] His only emotion was that of the Spirit which possessed him; and the only sensible joy which he tasted here below was to meet faithful souls, and that because he could save them.

Evil made him sorrowful even unto agony. The piercing cry which goes up from all creation travailing for the glory of the children of God, for its renewal and transfiguration,[3] filled the soul of Jesus, and nowhere else has found a fuller and more moving expression: men have always thought of him as the Crucified, the most gentle and best-beloved of martyrs.

Considered in its essence, beyond all accidental and artificial divisions, founded on culture and race, climate and time, civilisation and religion, the human race divides itself into three classes: the multitude, men of talent, and men of genius. It is a gigantic pyramid, of which the multitude forms the base, men of talent the middle, and men of genius the summit. Genius carries with it originality, invention, and the initiative; it creates new forms and gives impetus to the whole, leads mankind in directions hitherto unknown, troubles or calms, leads astray or directs, abases or uplifts. Men of talent do not invent, they follow the inspirations of genius, apply and preserve, interpret and divulge them. In them are seen the painful effort and patient labour which are the honour of every man of good will. If genius be a god, talent is his prophet.

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[1] Luke xix. 41; John xi. 35.

[2] Isaiah liii. 3.

[3] Romans viii. 15.

A prey to its instincts and vague desires, the crowd, passive and without initiative, obeys the impulse of its masters ; receives from them ideas ready made, and directions for its course ; it is the flock which follow where the shepherd leads. However great it may be, no human genius is perfect ; but it has its limits and excesses, weakness and violence, sudden intuitions and sudden eclipses, errors and blindness. Intermittent inspiration exhausts it ; its works fade and grow old ; sooner or later its creations are out of date. Nothing of all this was in Christ ; his word, his life, his work, brood over mankind like a brilliant sky, astonishing the reason, ruling conscience, defying the changes and power of time.

Human genius has differences which result from the faculties in which it excels. Genius is shown in idea, in action, and in aesthetics ; the first thinks and conceives, existing in philosophers, moralists, and scientific men, who wrest some secrets from the riddle of things, from God, from the human soul, and from nature. Men of action have power to subjugate, as politicians, conquerors, and the higher class of workmen ; these are the leaders of the men who move and transform the world. Others, possessed by the ideal, translate it ; and become orators, writers, poets, and artists, they embody under a sensible form, in word, colour or harmony, on canvas, in stone or metal.

No human genius is universal, it can only bring its energy to bear on one point, and the dominant faculty always subordinates the others. One kind only is excepted, the religious genius.

The development and predominance of a sense of the divine, is the chief characteristic of the religious genius. It floods and penetrates the soul which possesses it, and marks every faculty with its seal ; it keeps the soul in communion with God, and, while others exist in the world of man and of nature, the religious soul is centred in the Infinite. It feels God's presence everywhere, everywhere it looks to and calls on God, meditates on and adores him, its life is from him ; such a soul is a temple filled by God.

Of all the forms with which human nature can be clothed, the religious form is no doubt the most perfect, for it gathers together all powers into the highest harmony, concentrating them on the sublimest object which the intelligence, the will, and the power of action can attain. Since truth, goodness, and the ideal have God for their centre and perfection, to draw nurture from God is to live in eternal truth, eternal goodness, absolute beauty.

When the religious genius finds outward and visible expression, it implies and necessarily includes all others : the genius of thought to teach men the highest truths of God, destiny, and life ; the genius of action to command and discipline conscience ; the genius of art, to embody the divine ideal in word or ritual, so as to charm the human being through his senses. Indeed, all the great men who influence mankind on the religious side, are also great thinkers, great legislators, great artists ; they have science, power, attraction. In the name of God whose ambassadors they declare themselves, they do not discuss, but affirm, they speak as masters and exercise a sort of fascination over the multitude : strong natures, they have the secret of inspiring faith in those who are worthy of it ; they flow through the centuries, like rivers of life, irrigating and nourishing thousands of generations, through which they take their course.

Jesus has never been classed in a special category of human genius, owing to the full and unequalled harmony of all his faculties. Yet, if I dared apply to him a name too small for his glory, I would say that he is the religious genius, in its essence and ideal splendour.

The majority of great men who have founded a religion have only been reformers, as Zoroaster and Sâkya-Muni, mingling with their doctrine errors which conscience and reason reject. The dualism of the one, the strange asceticism of the other, are enough to condemn them; and the holiest law which, before the Gospel, ruled any people, that of Moses, bore an indelible mark of imperfection. Transitory in its essence, it disappeared as soon as the grown man was ready for the Kingdom of God.

All the notes of the religious genius in its absolute perfection realized are shown in Christ, as the evangelists reveal him, as Christian faith adores him, and as he discloses himself. Before him, even in Moses and the prophets, we find a sketch only; after him, even among the saints, we find but a copy of this divine model. He does not offer only an idea of God more or less new and original, but always abstract; he reveals the living and personal God, the Father of heaven. He is the express image of God, sensible, living, personal, one with him;[1] who sees him, sees the Father;[2] who believes in him, believes in the Father;[3] he did not only point to heaven, but heaven in him was opened. He instituted no vain ritual, no sterile pomp, which speak to the sense and imagination of crowds, he lives still under the symbols and sacraments of worship founded by him; and man communicates with his divine being when he participates in those religious rites. While others impose laws and codify them, enslaving their sectaries by their power, he communicates to the faithful the Spirit of God, his own spirit, and makes himself beloved. Others speak to a people, a race, a time; he speaks to every creature, without distinction of people, race, and time. Moses was but a servant: Jesus is the Son of God.

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[1] John x. 30.
[2] John xii. 45.
[3] John xi. 41.

The essential note of religious genius, the test of its truth, and its title to the veneration of men, is holiness; virtue is the touchstone of its mission. A man may be the messenger of God without working miracles; true miracle consists in the light of conscience and a pure life. Wonders may deceive, heroism and a will obedient to God's law do not deceive; so-called visions may be only an illusion, the practice of good always manifests the presence of the perfect Being.

All men of great religious genius bear the marks of some moral weakness, or disclose some hidden wound. When we read the life of Mahomet, our conscience is shocked by the polygamy which dishonoured his last years, and shows the weakness of this great man, a politician but no saint, who could not master his passions even at an age when moderation seems a natural virtue. Nor can we absolve the wise Sâkya-Muni from that pessimism which is the basis of his doctrine, and the violent asceticism which may perhaps be a great secret to die by, but which is the very negation of our destiny on earth.

Man is not only made to conquer heaven, but to be the master of the world. The true religious teacher must impart to him the science of death, while he does not withhold the science of life; Jesus alone was an exception to the fatal law of moral failure. No one has ever found him in conflict with good against the will of his Father. He is the human ideal of sanctity, the spotless type of virtue; and the best among the sons of men are those who come nearest to him. Sanctity has overflowed mankind with the thought of him; since Jesus came, he sanctifies all he touches; virtue has multiplied in his train; it seems to form the wake of Christ across the waves of the human ocean.

The most important fact in the interior history of great souls is the genesis of their vocation. They only exist as they become conscious of their providential destiny. All have a tendency to reveal themselves, to bring themselves forward and to act; the greater they are, the more imperious is this impulse; but when they manifest themselves in action they have to reckon with circumstances and time. The crime of genius is to betray or falsify its career, as its glory is to accomplish it to the end. If unfaithful, it becomes a scourge; if docile, a guide and leader. When a genius, conscious of its own powers, submits to God as to a sovereign law, when he has the supreme gift of knowing his needs and opportunities, he is able to act, for his vocation is clear. The majority hesitate long; only after great exertions are they conscious of themselves and the part they have to play; they acquire with much labour the knowledge of their surroundings and their time; they seek with anguish to know the will of God of which they have not the secret; their selfishness and passions mingle with the work which demands self-sacrifice; they often shrink from difficulties and obstacles, or else throw themselves blindly into them; here is a drama of which history only reveals to us fragmentary scenes of the cruel drama, known in its entirety to conscience alone.

But Jesus always answers to his high destiny, which he knew from all eternity by divine knowledge, from his conception by intuitive knowledge. All his vocation lay in the original fact of his divine sonship. As Son of God, he could have no other function in the world than to extend the kingdom of his Father; the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, as he afterwards called it. His words, teaching, acts, and entire life, his struggles and death itself are not conceivable without the ultimate intention which was their only cause.

From the biblical point of view, mankind was then divided into two portions: Judaism and Paganism. In Judaism the Kingdom of God had already begun and its awful name was known; its law, imperfect and for slaves, had been promulgated: Jesus was to give it its complement and perfection,[1] and in this his Messianic character consisted. His Church was to take the place of the law of Moses, and to include not only the faithful Jew, but also the despised heathen, the victim of sin and error.

The whole of mankind, in spite of the Mosaic law given to Israel, in spite of the wisdom and intellects of great men, was prostrate beneath the empire of evil, and powerless to conquer it; the work of Jesus was to give it the very Spirit of God which alone can triumph over evil, and to baptize it into that Spirit; so that he was to be not alone the Messiah of the Jews, but the only Saviour of all nations.[2] Mankind, in the depths of its nature, seeks God, who changes not; it is destined to know him, to share his life, and find in him the fulfilment of its desires: the task of Jesus is to lead man thither, imparting truth and life;[3] but as these can only be found in him alone, he must needs draw all men unto him.[4] The conscience of all men needs, and eternal justice exacts, an expiation; Jesus was to be the Lamb of God, the victim who washes away the sin of the world.[5] Mankind is ignorant of God for whom it is created: it was necessary that Jesus should reveal his name. He was to be the only Master;[6] men had not as yet learnt that love was the whole law of duty; Jesus must be the teacher and lawgiver. Thus was the Kingdom of God to be constituted, a Kingdom destined to suffer violence, and the violent were to take it by force;[7] Jesus was to be its founder.

Under the action of the personal and living God who fills the nature of man, knowing the will of his Father, penetrating the souls of men, whose Messiah he knew himself to be, sounding the depths of the human creature, knowing the pain which gnaws him and the evil which destroys him, he saw the whole drama of the grand life of mankind, knew that the hour of his history had come, and cried with a voice which shook the world: "I am the Expected of my people, I am the Desire of nations."

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[1] Matt. v. 17.
[2] I. Tim xvi. 5.
[3] John x. 10.
[4] John xii. 32.
[5] John i. 29, 36.
[6] Matt. xxiii.
[7] Matt. xi. 12.

Such was the vocation of Jesus. No destiny can be compared to his, for all others are marked by the infirmity of genius, the narrowness of race, the prejudices of the moment; and all, like man's wisdom, are limited in one or another direction. We may give to Mahomet the honour of having wrested some Arab tribes from idolatry, and thus become, for one race, the apostle of God's unity; but we cannot absolve him from having declared himself the bearer of a final revelation; the Koran was set aside, before its birth, by the Bible and by the Gospel which he plagiarised. Whatever admiration we may feel for the gentleness and kindly nature of Sâkya-Muni, proclaiming himself the master of the way of salvation to men, it is impossible not to shrink from a pessimism which declares that existence itself is an evil, and the sole remedy is to be freed from all existence or Nirvana. Its moral and social code is in some points admirable; but Buddha gave no force for carrying it out, and herein lies the radical weakness of human genius. There are words, examples, and a moral law to enlighten; but always the dead letter which kills, never the spirit which maketh alive.

The vocation of Jesus shows no personal weakness, no narrowness of race, no error of his time. Original, as all which comes directly from God, it bears in its human form the characters of God: universality, creative efficiency, changelessness.

Born as a Jew, at a definite time, Jesus was like none of the great men of his people; he was neither a Jew of Palestine nor of Alexandria. He is greater than Hillel, the rabbi of

Jerusalem, greater than Philo the Hellenist. His words and doctrines recall nothing of either one or the other, he is himself alone. What he spake was for all time, as real to-day as eighteen hundred years ago; the typal man wrought in him; his work embraced the whole of mankind in so far as it is eternal and essential; his Kingdom will never pass away till God and heaven, whose names they bear, are no more; the Law he formulated as a code of that Kingdom will never become obsolete, for it expresses the eternal relations between the will of God and men whom he will save; and the power which he brings with his Law is the very power of God, his living and personal Spirit, ready to inflame mankind.

Such was the force of the Christian idea that it has opened a way across all ages and nations, living and unsubdued as at its earliest day, in spite of man's resistance. Christ, though he left the earth, remained what he had manifested himself in the face of the universe; his spirit enlightens, his work lives, the Kingdom of God pursues its magnificent evolution. Judaism, always powerless as a religion, sees him increase, it cannot destroy him, and must submit. The last remnants of Hindoo paganism are falling to pieces, and while Mahometanism endeavours to wean savages from their gross fetishism, Jesus sways the world by his Spirit, the only source from which man can always draw the truth of God, power and peace.

A strong vocation gives its direction to life, fills up its inward activity, concentrates thought, the will, and the affections; but that of Jesus absorbed him entirely; it enlightened, sustained and nourished him in the long years at Nazareth. While his life was unknown, the Spirit of God fostered his growth, moulded and prepared him for his work. He received all from God and nothing from men, for no master could teach him the things that are above man. All that he saw, felt, willed, and desired, was given to him by intuition and inspiration; he looked within himself; all his words were living in and were but the clear and strong echo of his consciousness; hesitation and doubt, experiment and effort, were alike unknown to him.

Human genius when inspired is agitated, carried away, unable to contain itself; the calm of Jesus was full and constant as his inspiration. Master of himself, he acted only when he chose. When his hour was come the workman, the carpenter's son, was to quit his obscure life, and to say with decision, firmness, fulness, and tranquil energy: "The time is accomplished; the kingdom of heaven is among you; repent and believe."[1] This was to be his first word, the commentary on the mysterious answer that he had given when twelve years old: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" It contains the whole of his public life and destiny.

Rationalism, whose critical faculty has never been able to sound the religious genius of the East, has been as clumsily mistaken about the special work of Jesus as about his nature. It has seen nothing in the mysterious relation which welds Christ to God, and has only succeeded in giving an insufficient interpretation of his divine sonship; hence its errors about the destiny of the Master. It has never lifted itself to his own idea which distinguishes him from every human being. It has considered him as a reformer, a moralist, a religious and social revolutionary, a legislator and a founder of a pure religion, having only at his command, like all men, ability to instruct, formulate new dogmas and purer commandments, and to establish a new society; it has not recognised in him the power of communicating to man the Spirit of God, as a living and personal force.

This conception may go beyond the systems of a philosophy, which suppresses the divine personality, but it must be accepted by the historian who respects the evangelical documents, and who, instead of describing Jesus according to his own ideas, seeks, on the irresistible witness of history, to represent him as he declares himself.

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[1] Mark i. 15.

When a man called of God is ripe for his work, the circumstances in which he is to act, summon him to declare himself; as God creates a genius and gives him to his work, so he arranges the events in which a genius is to take his place; there is a pre-established harmony between the course of the one and the evolution of the others, the fulness of time is the same for both.

When Jesus approached his thirtieth year, the age of complete manhood among the Jews, the same Spirit which produced him, and made the whole movement of the ages converge towards him,[1] directly prepared the theatre in which he should appear. It made straight a way for him, and woke the soul of his people by one of those voices which excite the multitude and shake the conscience.

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[1] See Book I., chap. i.

BOOK II.

JOHN THE FORERUNNER AND THE COMING OF JESUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE JEWS IN JUDAEA TOWARDS THE YEAR 26. THE COMING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

WE must pause for a moment in the Gospel history to examine the life of the Jewish society in Palestine, towards the year 26, at the time when Pilate, as Roman procurator, was governor of Judaea. We find a course of events, a religious and social organisation, a strife of parties, a mass of superstitions, prejudices, passions and hopes, currents of opinion, in one word, a state of national consciousness, which we must study close at hand and in some detail, to understand the surroundings in which Jesus lived, and the movement which, under the action of John the Baptist, was to prepare his career.

At the first glance, we discern in this seething little world many distinct groups. There were first the great patrician and sacerdotal families, from which were drawn the high priests, the families of Boethos, Hanan, Phabi, and Kanith. The high priesthood had become for them a sort of inheritance for which they disputed before the Roman authority, by the power of intrigue and of money. Opulent, proud, and detested, this aristocracy pressed the people for tithes and taxes, and outraged its poverty by a luxurious life. The upper classes and the sacerdotal caste were not forgiven for their conciliatory attitude towards the detested Gentile power. The high priests, appointed and dismissed at the will of the procurators, had lost credit. The people, which hated and despised them, revenged themselves by insult, ridicule, and curses; nothing stopped the flood of hatred which rose and overpassed all bounds. Twenty years later this was the song in the streets of Jerusalem:

> Woe to the family of Boethos, woe! because they smite with their rods!
> Woe to the family of Hanan, woe! because they hiss as vipers!
> Woe to the family of Kataros, because of their slanderous pens!
> Woe to the family of Ismail ben Phabi, because of the weight of their fists!
> They themselves are high priests; their sons are treasurers; their sons-in-law keepers of the Temple, and their servants smite the people with their rods.[1]

These curses of the exasperated crowd say much for the brutality and tyranny of the priests. Their rascally servants would, with a band of ruffians, bear down on the threshing-floors and granaries to carry off their masters' tithes by force of arms, and ill-treat those who refused to pay.[2] The high priests often had the exclusive right of selling the animals for sacrifice. The family of Hanan had established bazaars (Kaneioth) on the Mount of Olives for breeding and selling doves; they succeeded in rendering this pious monopoly lucrative. Abusing their authority, they multiplied the cases in which, according to ritual, the sacrifices of pigeons were obligatory; and these became so excessively dear that a single pair of doves was sold for a gold piece. While these pontiffs were bloated with wealth, the priests of inferior rank died of want and hunger.[3]

It will be easily understood that complete religious indifference obtained in this pampered class; the degenerate sons of Aaron and Levi burned with no impatience to see the Kingdom of God, and were yet thoroughly conservative. They formed the nucleus of the Sadducean[1] party; their orthodoxy was unbending, particularly in all that pertained to ritual, and their judgments were inexorable. The things of another wörld scarcely attracted their attention; materialistic, sensual, and sceptical, they did not believe in it. To uphold established order, to live on good terms with the Romans, to remain in office, to make good cheer and to enjoy themselves, was for them essential. Religion was not an end but a means; they took care not to say it; but the axiom was the secret rule of their life.

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[1] *Talmud, Hierosol., Pesachim,* 57 a.

[2] *Antiq.* xx. 8, 8; 9, 2.

[3] *Antiq.* xx. 8, 8; 9, 2.

Besides the aristocracy of birth, fortune, and the priesthood, there existed also an aristocracy of religious knowledge; the men of letters, doctors and scribes. Since the "Torah" had attained so high a place in Jewish life and had become a power in it almost equally with the Temple, the men of the "Torah" took their place by the side of men of worship. Sacrifice absorbed the attention of one party, and study that of the others; the first were employed in sacerdotal functions on account of their birth, but the others sprang from all tribes and all classes; they represented knowledge, whether religious, moral, ritual, and juridical; they commented on, copied, and propagated the Book; and soon rose above the priestly class, becoming the masters of opinion. That power is to the strongest, is a law of all human society when it reaches a certain degree of culture; and the strongest are those who know.

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[1] The party of the Just, *Tsedekah*, justice. This name at first, under John Hyrcanus, seems to have designated the party composed above all of priests, and who, opposed to the exaggerations of the Pharisees, insisted only on justice, what was demanded by the text of the law. Perhaps they liked to attach themselves by this name to the last of the Pontiffs whose name was held in veneration, Simeon named the Just. Cf. *Antiq.* xiii. 9; xii. 2, 4; xviii, 1, &c. *Bell. Jud.* ii. 8.

The doctors did more than study and teach the "Torah," they were distinguished by a stricter fidelity to all its rules, resisting with energy all Gentile influence. These were the "Chasidim," or pious, dating from the time when Hellenism, after the conquest of Alexander, invaded everything; they had stood firm against the heathen civilization and manners of the Greeks and Syrians, and they were at this time resisting Roman corruption. Jewish exclusiveness was found in them in all its bitterness; they personified the national conscience, they remembered and hoped. All the facts of the great history of Israel lived in their memory; all the promises of God to the people of which they were members, gleamed before them as a splendid future: the "Torah" was everything for them, because it contained their past and their destiny, and taught them that legal justice which, making them agreeable to God, guaranteed the triumph of their race and faith.

This double aristocracy gave rise to two parties, whose struggles, rivalries, and excesses filled the two last centuries of Jewish history: the Sadducees (Çadūkim) or the Just, and the Pharisees (Perūshim) or the Separated. The first belonged almost entirely to the aristocracy of fortune, or the priesthood, the second to that of letters.

In becoming a party the Pharisees[1] came under the law of every sect; in that they exaggerated their principles and tendencies, they deserved the anathemas of the gentlest and wisest of masters; self-blinded, their minds closed to all living inspiration, they understood nothing of the mystery of events, and became the most hostile and obstinate power opposed to the foundation of God's Kingdom. Absorbed in the study of the "Torah," or Book, they knew the letter only; the spirit

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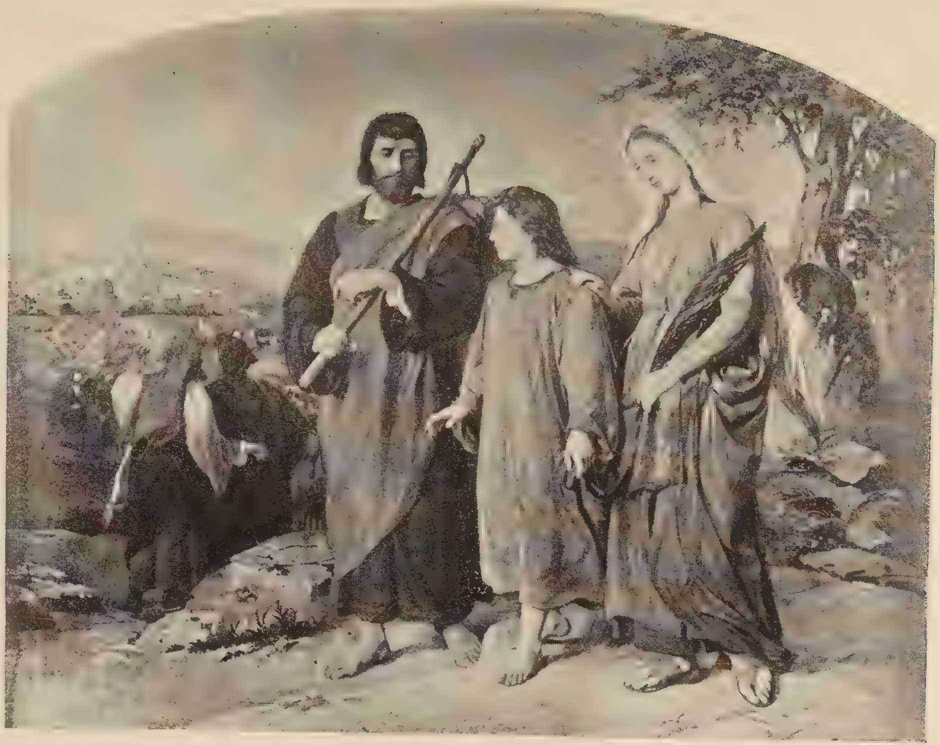
[1] From *Parousch*, separation, distinction. The Pharisees or the Separated, Distinguished, Pure, were apart from all which was not Jewish. All intercourse with Gentiles, every concession made to their customs on the part of the Sadducees, was held as profanation.



TWELVE-YEAR-OLD JESUS ON HIS WAY TO JERUSALEM.

From the Painting by O. Mengelberg.

escaped them, and the letter killed them. They neglected more and more the moral element, and attended only to that which was exterior and ceremonial; they did not trouble themselves about the holiness of the soul, but were zealous for legal holiness. Duty for them was no longer the accomplishment of the will of God, but, before all things, the strict practice of the law. Carried away by their zeal for observances, they did not think of increasing virtue, but of extending the ritual: the greatest saint was not he who subdued himself and loved God and his neighbour, but who made the greater number of fasts and of vows, of ablutions and sacrifices, who wore the largest phylacteries and longest tassels, walked with his back most bent, his eyes most fixed on the ground, who affected the most gloomy manners on fast-days, forbidding to anoint the head, to wash the face,[1] or even to greet friends,[2] and who used the most interminable prayers. Such piety was only a hypocritical mask; the art of seeming and of lying, of concealing the emptiness and vices of the soul under an outward appearance of sanctity, became almost universal among these false devotees.

No noble thought was ever heard from the pulpits or in the synagogues; the celebrated teachers who, under Herod the Great, had above all contributed to the development of tradition and custom, to the juridical interpretation of the law, men like Shemaiah and Abtalion, Hillel and Shammai, had disappeared, and, as always happens when great men are wanting, inferior men insisted on excessive detail. Formalism increased, questions became more subtle, and the strangest and most unrestrained casuistry took the place of teaching.[3] Ritual discussions interested the learned men, and were the battleground between rival parties and schools. The question whether, on the day of Feast of Expiation, incense should be burnt before the Holy of Holies, or rather in the Holy of Holies itself, immediately after the entering in of the high priest, was judged to be of such importance that the Pharisees on the eve of the great day obliged the sacrificing priest to swear to observe the true rite. It was disputed whether the oblation which accompanied the sacrifice belonged to the priest or the altar; whether the herbs gathered in the spring as first-fruits on the day after the Passover, should be cut on a sabbath day; whether the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb was a violation of the sabbath; whether at the Feast of Tabernacles the libation of water should be made on the altar itself, and the procession of willow-branches should pause at the altar; whether the tithes should be taken on crops such as wheat and oil, or also on mint, and anise, and cummin; whether the oath by heaven or earth, by Jerusalem or by the soul, was binding, or simply an oath by God; whether men must swear by the Temple or by the gold in the Temple, by the altar or the victim on the altar.

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[1] *Talmud Hierosol. Schabbat.*, f. 12, 1.

[2] *Id.*, *Taanith*, i. 4-7.

[3] *Id.*, *Beracot*, fol. 13, 2; *Sotah*, fol. 20, 3; *Babyl.*, *Sotah*, fol. 22, 2.

Base and empty casuistry, without morality and without dignity! The most exaggerative were naturally of the most authority; the disciples of Hillel, inclined to moderate interpretation, were outstripped by those of Shammai, austere and irreconcilable; the letter made the law; those who stood most by the letter were most certain of success. When once passion is let loose in religion, as in politics, the art of flattery is the secret of conquest.

A famous question was debated between the two schools: whether it was permissible to eat on the sabbath or feast day, an egg which was laid on the sabbath day. The mild Hillel inexorably answered No; but the austere Shammai was less strict in this particular case. In practice the stricter master was obeyed; but on the other hand Shammai forbade the instruction of children and the care of the sick on the sabbath day; nor would he allow a sea voyage or the attack of a town three days before the sabbath.

The supreme question for pious Pharisees was that of purity—not the purity of the heart which God loves and the prophets required, but legal purity, which is visible, and which placed the Jew in external and violent opposition with the Gentile. It was in dispute whether the flesh of a dead body defiled, or the skin and bones; the contact with Gentile books or rather with Gentile sacred books; whether the water which ran from an impure vase was itself impure. "Cursed," said the Zealots, "is he who despises the washing of hands! he shall be cut off from the earth." The Sadducees scoffed: "You will see," they said, "that the Pharisees will end by purifying the sun's orb." A puerile rigorism took possession of them; their pious practices consisted in sacrifies, in vows, in ordered, multiplied, and complicated prayers, which they said as much as possible in the Temple, and sometimes in the street itself. There were many ablutions before being present at a sacrifice, and even before the reading of the Law; they washed their hands before eating, according to a practice probably established by Hillel and Shammai; they rigidly abstained from the bread, oil, and wine of the Gentiles; they fasted twice in the week, until the evening, severely and voluntarily, above all on Monday and Thursday; and gave their alms with ostentation.

All these arbitrary customs were introduced gradually, after the exile, under the influence of the Pharisees, and became a severe yoke which they laid on themselves and the people. Moral direction was necessarily compromised by the inextricable detail of outward observances. The Gospels enable us to gather in the many censures of Jesus on the Pharisees, that, among many other errors, they thought they were dispensed from assisting their poor relatives, by consecrating all their goods to God.[1]

Across this maze of legal subtleties and these casuistical wranglings, moral science still threw some light. The doctors loved to condense their wisdom, in Oriental fashion, into a few terse and vivid sentences, or parables of original and pointed form. The Talmud gives us many specimens; the book called "Pirke Aboth" is an interesting collection; but, like the sublime axioms of philosophy, and the fine precepts of the Fathers of the synagogue, the "great couples," as they were called, were only a dead letter; neither of them had availed to become the living law of those who repeated them or to whom they were addressed. The Gentiles had been unable to break the fatal yoke of fatalism and pantheism, and the Jewish doctors had succumbed to a miserable formalism.

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[1] Matt. v. 20; xv. 3.

Yet it would be an historical error and an injustice to make the Pharisaic party as a whole responsible for these religious errors, absurdities, exaggerations, and vices. The New Testament sketches several figures of great simplicity and nobleness, such as Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Gamaliel. We find there the real descendants of Hillel, the true type of Jew who looked to God with hope. They formed a chosen body whose wisdom was not always listened to in the councils of the elders and chief priests; they did not succeed in arresting the torrent of opinion, but they had the glory of seeing clearly; they heard the appeal of Christ, and incurred the fate of those minorities which are crushed in violent crises, where defeat is sometimes an honour and triumph an evil.

In the mass of the people, what is now called the middle class, took scarce any interest in these empty scholastic discussions, nor cared about the innumerable practices of this rigorous school. They might admire the devout Pharisee, but not imitate him. The Sadducees laughed at him: "Look at him," they said, "he torments himself in this life, to find with difficulty his recompense in another": but none the less he preserved his sullen and proverbial pride, nothing counted in his eyes but his knowledge of the Law and his ritual practices.

The ignorant and sceptical people, all who did not strictly observe the Pharisaic rules, inspired him with profound contempt; he treated them as sinners,[1] as an abomination, and as unclean animals.

The publicans above all,[2] collectors of taxes, agents of the Imperial treasury, who inspected merchandise and received the duties on imports and exports, and took tolls on bridges and roads, were objects of his disdain and hatred. On the other hand he was satisfied with himself: "I have done all," he said, "and have failed in nothing." In general the people were rather lukewarm than indifferent; on feast days all were excited, even those who, like the publicans, mixed with the Gentile world, and were content to be its administrative agents. They encumbered the Court of the Gentiles, and, from a distance, took part in the sacrifices and the rest of the ceremonial worship.

The Essenes were a solitary exception.[3] These ascetics were a curious phenomenon of Jewish life at that time. They formed no party in the nation, inasmuch as they had renounced the world and all public action, but rather they were a religious order. They are not to be considered as belonging to the Yogis of India, or the Pythagoreans in Greece, or the Theurgists of the Alexandrian school; their true masters were the "Chasidim" or Pious, fervent and anti-Hellenic Jews, from whose ranks came the impetuous Judas Maccabaeus. To their eyes the law of Moses was everything; for it they had quitted active life, discussion, and militant policy; they were absorbed in retreat, in rigorous asceticism and contemplation. The Pharisees seemed to them lukewarm and the synagogue degenerate. Unable to change the world, they died to the world; they lived together in community and in poverty. During some time they were called "Ebionites," or the Poor, because they declared they would possess nothing; and finally, they grouped themselves into a true congregation and became the "Essenes." Retreating to the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, they built true convents under the palm trees of the oasis of Engedi.

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[1] The ἁμαρτωλοί of the Gospels.

[2] Τελῶναι, ἀρχιτελῶναι. Cf. Luke xix. 2. *Bell. Jud.* ii. 14, 4.

[3] This name Essenes is the translation of the Greek word Ἐσσαῖοι. It recalls the Syriac word *hassa*, which is itself a translation of the Hebrew *chasidim*, pious. This etymology seems to us far more likely than that which would derive the word Essene from *sahah*, to baptize; from *asah*, to heal; or *hachah*, the retiring. Cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* xviii.; *B. J.* ii. 8.

They gave up all endeavour for the amelioration of mankind, leaving everything to God in their mysticism; they believed in the immortality of the soul, looked for their enfranchisement from matter, and awaited future happiness; they took no oaths; were sober, chaste, silent, mortified, and frugal; they would have no servants, for all were brethren and equal. Josephus tells us that they did not marry,[1] but took charge of the children of others, at an age when they were still susceptible of discipline, treated them as though they belonged to their own family, and formed them after their own image. Their principal rite consisted in frequent ablutions; they bathed at sunrise every morning.

They considered themselves as priests; for it was written: "Ye are a people of priests,"[2] and abstained from wine, because wine was forbidden to the sacrificing priest in the exercise of his functions; they did not enter towns, because the gateways were ornamented with statues; they would not use Greek or Roman money, for the Book of Deuteronomy forbade graven images. The law of Moses was the tomb wherein they were buried; no longer living men, but ghosts. They passed through deserts and villages, as beings of another world, clothed with a white tunic and the "mehil," their loins bound with a long girdle, and at their side the "dolabra," a small hatchet, whose use as prescribed by Deuteronomy is only peaceful. The Pharisees despised them and nick-named them "Hemero-baptists" with allusion to their morning bath, and ridiculed their rites; their communism seemed a foolish thing and they were treated as pious fools. The Essenes appeared for the first time under Aristobulus I., a hundred years before Jesus Christ, and they finally disappeared about the year 70, when Jerusalem and the Temple were overthrown.

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[1] *Bell. Jud.*, ii. 8, 2.

[2] Ex. ii.

Removed from party and from the powerful and educated classes, apart from the more or less indifferent and corrupt crowd, there are, in almost every nation, a certain number of souls who, by the very mediocrity of their situation, escape from the corruption of pride and riches, from the vices of the multitude, and even from those prejudices which, under the name of science and culture, frequently lead astray, narrow, and paralyse the minds of learned men. These men live unknown and inglorious, doing their duty in obscurity; simple and upright, they fear God, are content with a little; having neither riches nor ambition, they bear the trials of life without a murmur, pity those who suffer, love peace, and keep themselves from evil. Their eye is single and their heart sound, they see rightly because their will is right; they hunger and thirst after righteousness; they are the salt of the earth, preserving it from total corruption.

When God wishes to move the world and transform a nation, he sends his prophets. Prophets are the lever of God, and the poor of this world his fulcrum. The voice which announces holy things finds an echo in them; they are the first to answer to the rays of spring making all things new. It would be difficult to number them; but God knows them, and his Spirit dwells in them. To neglect this element in the life of nations, silent though it be, is to omit one of the most active powers. We must look in times of crisis and anguish, towards these forgotten people, nameless and unknown; whom God spares; who escape the deluge and quit the ark to begin a new era on a renewed and purified earth.

It is difficult to estimate with any precision this element of Judaean society, which undeniably existed almost everywhere, in town and country, in Galilee and Samaria, under the shadow of the Temple, on the shores of the lake, and even among the hated publicans.

In spite of their serfdom and the shipwreck of their independence, the Jews, in Judaea, as in their colonies amid the Gentile world, still kept some shadow of their own self-government. This authority, at once religious and national, resided in an assembly of seventy-one members. Jewish tradition loved to ascribe this institution to Moses, and invoked the Law[1] to give it a sacred character; but as a fact there is nothing in common between the Sanhedrin and the Elders of whom Moses speaks. These last were only the representatives of the people; they deliberated on great occasions, but they had no national authority. We should be equally wrong if we confounded the Sanhedrin with the "Great Assembly" constituted by Ezra, which was only a college of scribes called in to solve questions on religious matters.

The Sanhedrin properly so-called only appeared towards the middle of the third century before Jesus Christ, under Antiochus Epiphanes. Josephus calls it the γερουσία.[2] This assembly must have been a concession of the Ptolemys, who, in order to gain the sympathies of the Jews, recognised their right to govern themselves. This tribunal, whose powers were, in their origin, under the Seleucidae, probably very restricted, became more influential under the Asmonaeans. We must go back to the reign of king Hyrcanus, about the year 130, to see the "Beth-Din" transformed into a "Sunedrion," and sharing the government of the nation with the high priest who, up to that time, had entire authority. The Romans, when masters of Judaea, in the year 63, allowed this national representation to remain, with limited powers; and we shall find it, under the Herods and the procurators, with the organisation given it by Hyrcanus.

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[1] Numbers xi. 16.

[2] *Antiq.*, xii. 3, 3.

The high priest presided over the Sanhedrin, at least after the death of Hillel.[1] He was called "Nasi" or Prince, and the vice-president was called "Ab-beth-Din," Father of the Tribunal, because he presided in judicial causes. The assembly drew its members from the families who had the right to the high-priesthood, like those of Hanan and Phabi; who were high priests. Among those who occupied a great position on account of wealth and who could, by the aid of their genealogical tables, witness to the purity of their Jewish origin, were the elders, *πρεσβύτεροι*; and lastly, among the doctors, or chiefs of the school or rabbis, were those who copied the Torah, studied, commented on, and taught it; the scribes, *γραμματεῖς*, and the masters, *διδάσκαλοι*, *ἐπιστάτης*.

The duties of the Sanhedrin were various and numerous; all that constituted Jewish life, in its smallest details, sprang from its authority: it was at once a council, a court of justice, and a parliament. It was the judge in questions of doctrine, law, and ritual, watched over the purity of the race, the marriages of sacerdotal families; fixed the calendar and the new moons, and arbitrated in disputes between Jews. It was the guardian of traditions and the Law, cited before it blasphemers and false prophets, sentenced them even to death and stoning, subject only to the ratification of the Roman procurator.

In the time of Jesus and after the reign of Herod, it was a greatly discredited body.[2] In giving to the high priest the presidency of the Sanhedrin, and in making the high priest a creature of their will, Herod and the Romans found a means of enslaving the whole body, and making it subservient to them. The true national life was no longer to be sought for in its official representatives. When the Pharisees had the upper hand in the Great Council, their eager zeal for the Law shrank at nothing, and they did not hesitate to summon king Herod to appear before them.[1] The Sadducean party which had gained supremacy in the assembly had no longer this haughty independence, and its only thought was to suppress all outbursts among the people and to avoid the slightest conflict with the Roman authority. Pilate had no better allies than the high priests in keeping the conquered nation tranquil under the yoke. We shall even see that, in the trial of Jesus, they were more zealous than the governor for the peace of the empire and the friendship of Caesar.

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[1] *Antiq.* xx. 10; Acts v. 17, &c.; vii. 1; ix. 1; i. 2, &c.

[2] *Antiq.* xv. 2, 4; 3, 1.

It is rare that the established powers and permanent bodies, are reformers; they think chiefly of maintaining and perpetuating themselves; the present absorbs them, new ideas distress them, the morrow alarms them, they love rather to look backwards than forwards; and their function is rather that of preserving than of innovating. Every step in advance requires the sacrifice of worn-out forms, and passes over the crumbling ruins of that which has ceased to live. The Sanhedrin had submitted to this law, and would have hindered the Kingdom of God, if any human power could restrain the irresistible force of the Spirit.

The political and religious events which, for more than a hundred years, succeeded each other in the little Jewish state of Palestine, rendered its position increasingly critical and led to its ruin. The fratricidal struggles of the last Asmonaean, the taking of Jerusalem by Pompey, the enthronement of Herod by Augustus as king of a reconstituted Judaea, the heathen and tyrannical policy of this Idumaean, his attacks on religion, the parcelling out of his kingdom, the ten years of violence and cruelty of the ethnarch Archelaus, the transformation of the ethnarchy into a province of the empire, the oath of fidelity to Caesar, a Gentile authority, the tax paid each year as a definite sign of servitude, the presence of the Roman procurators and their despotic administration, made up the entire sad history of the Jews from the year 64, and were so many blows falling upon an already ruined nation.

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[1] *Antiq.* xvii. 2, 4.

Every patriot was wounded in his passionate love for religion and country, a great sadness fell upon the whole nation, in mourning for a lost independence. The most cruel wound was less that they felt themselves vanquished by a Gentile power than that their liberty of worship should be violated. The majority was resigned to dwell under a foreign power, but none could bear a government which, by outraging their holy Law, was a weight on every conscience. The Roman procurators constantly laid a heavy and sacrilegious hand on the law, and the people in revolt preferred death to the spectacle of such abomination.[1] Indeed, the liberty to serve God is the holiest of all liberties, no other has more tenacious and indestructible roots in the heart of man; and among all the nations there is none which has shown more attachment to their God and their Law than the Jewish nation.

The time was far off in which Israel sought after idols and merited the curse of the prophets by faithlessness to Jehovah. Religion, even if ill-understood, had become its greatest passion. It was mingled with the blood of their race and with their country, and the people were always ready to rise in its defence; of all sentiments which could move it there were none more tumultuous and excitable.

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[1] *Cont. App.* i. 22.

Rome was aware of this: the two first emperors, Julius and Augustus Caesar, always knew how to deal with it; but their moderation was unable to prevent all collision; administrative needs continually came in conflict with Jewish demands; and the annual collection of taxes was a permanent occasion of conflict. In his earlier years, Tiberius continued the policy of his predecessors. A good shepherd, he said, in his selfish wisdom, shears his sheep, but takes care not to flay them.[1] He did not often change his procurators; knowing the profound corruption of man, he was aware of their greed, and said of them with disdain: "If you scare away the flies which devour the blood of a wounded man, so soon as they are satisfied, those who replace them will suck the wound with new avidity." [2]

However, towards the tenth year of his reign a scandalous event excited the whole aristocracy of Rome. Some Jews having been discovered in an act of swindling and rascality,[3] the old hatred which always slept in the heart of the Gentiles burst out against the entire nation. The minister Sejanus was made the instrument of the public anger, and swore to exterminate the detested race. Tiberius, now grown old in his luxurious Capreae, allowed his powerful minister to do as he pleased. The Jewish colonists soon felt the influence of what was passing in the metropolis, and Pilate was chosen towards the year 26 to succeed Valerius Gratus in Judaea.

The procurators who for twenty years had governed the country, had avoided wounding the religious sentiment too violently. Thus they never brought to Jerusalem the standards of the legions on which was the image of the emperor. This concession seemed a weakness to Pilate, whose first act, when he took possession of his government, was a violent outrage. He ordered the garrison to enter the city with their standards by night. The people, aware of the event, ran in crowds from Jerusalem to Caesarea, besieging Pilate for five days and five nights with entreaties that he would remove the abomination from the Holy City. On the sixth day the procurator desired the people to come to the Circus, whither at the same time he had sent a detachment of soldiers. The Jews began their supplications again; and on a given sign the soldiers, with drawn swords, advanced upon the multitude from all sides. The Jews remained immovable, and, baring their breasts, declared that they had rather die than survive the violation of their Law. Pilate was afraid; and gave an order to withdraw the standards from Jerusalem,[1] but, as if in obedience to an order from high quarters, he renewed his acts of violence, thus provoking an increase of revulsion and bitterness against Rome.

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[1] Tacit., *Ann.* xi. 42.

[2] Suet., *Nero*, 32.

[3] *Antiq.* xviii. 4. This was in connection with the conversion of a great Roman lady, named Fulvia. Three or four Jews made profit of this with unexampled cleverness and audacity. The husband, Saturninus, discovered the matter and denounced them to the prefect.

When the life of a people is threatened every sentiment is exaggerated. The Gentiles did not only seem oppressors to the Jews, but impious; not only the enemies of Israel, but the enemies of God: intercourse with them was a stain. Religious hatred, most terrible and implacable of passions, silently pursued them, for ever calling down upon them the chastisement and vengeance of Jehovah. This hatred brooded in the heart of the people and in the party of the highest Pharisees.

Any other nation, finding itself thus oppressed, would have yielded to force and resigned itself to the yoke: the Jew allowed himself to be repulsed and crushed, but did not yield; and, save a few Sadducees whom their ignoble interests attached to the procurators, all, even in the depths of their national distress, had faith in better days. Their hope grew with oppression, and was nourished by those very events which were so sad, humiliating, and painful.

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[1] *Antiq.* xviii. 3, 1; *Bell. Jud.* ii. 9, 2, 3.

Certain books were much read: Judith, the Maccabees, Daniel, Enoch, the Little Psalter of Solomon, the great collection of Psalms. There is always an oral or written literature which, in harmony with events, upholds the ideal of a people. Men were steeped in memories of the brave Maccabees and their glorious struggle; sought with enthusiasm for the riddle of the Apocalyptic books; loved to see the magnificent pictures descriptive of the successive fall of the great empires around Israel, still unshaken and untamed; they knew by heart the Little Psalter of Solomon, and the national songs of that great collection wherein the whole heart of the people beat. They borrowed from their divine poetry their groans, their tears, their sufferings, their curses, their patience; in it learned how to turn aside justice and hasten vengeance, how to implore, to hope, to call upon God, and, in a word, how to live.

In spite of all, and before the Romans their conquerors and masters, the Jews chose to live; for they believed in their vast destiny. One idea, indeed, transcended and summed up all the others, in the years wherein began their death agony: the Kingdom of God was at hand, and Messiah, their future King, was at last about to appear. That hope which for ages had seemed the inheritance and law of the prophets, but which arose in the heart of the people only in critical hours, as the rainbow in the storm, now became the property of all. Never, even under Egyptian slavery and Babylonian exile; under the Seleucidae, and Antiochus most brutal of all, had this dominating thought been more vigorous and impetuous. To whatever party men belonged, except the Sadducees; whether Pharisaic or Herodian; to whatever school men were attached, whether that of Hillel or that of Shammai; in whatever social rank they were, priests and elders, doctors and scribes, Ebionites and publicans, all were moved and excited.

When an idea takes vehement and passionate hold of a nation, it is seldom understood by all in the same way. It is modified, finely shaded, and altered to suit the prejudices, interests, and instincts of the moment. The idea of the Messiah among the Jews did not escape this fortune; in the mind of the lukewarm Sadducee it was other than in the soul of the ardent Pharisee; it was conceived in one way by the scribe or the legist absorbed in the Torah, and by the Haggadist irritated against Roman impiety; by the man of the people, blinded by superstition; by the pious Jew who lived in quiet expectation of the consummation of Israel; by the Jew of Palestine, and the Jew of Alexandria.

No one doubted that the Kingdom of God was about to be established; but public opinion was divided as to the manner of it. The high priests, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and even the partisans of Judas the Gaulonite; for different reasons, by prudence and selfishness, or a false interpretation of the Scriptures; imagined that Messiah was the same as Israel, and that the Kingdom of God meant obedience to the Law; they did not see that this Kingdom was incompatible with submission to a Roman governor, residing at Antioch, and a procurator established at Caesarea.

These doctrines exactly rendered the hopes of the aristocratic class, of all those preoccupied with themselves, who regulated their ideas so as not to trouble their selfish tranquillity, and dreamt that the future would be a continuation of the past. That Jerusalem should be more magnificent, that the Temple treasury should increase in wealth, that the blood of victims should run in floods into the brazen laver, that the porches should be encumbered by increasing crowds, that the elders should be more honoured and tithes more abundant, that the pulpits in the synagogues should have a larger audience, that the teaching of the masters should extend to the Gentiles, that proselytes should flock in, and the whole world should know the God of Israel: such was for them the true Kingdom of God.

This indifference, this easy resignation to their political servitude, this passive expectation of a glorious morrow, were not made for zealous, ardent, and liberal souls, such as many were among the Jews, and even in the bosom of the Pharisaic party, those who joined an eager desire for national greatness with their attachment to the Law, confounding the two things in the same vehement affection. From their ranks sprang the Maccabees, the six thousand who refused, under Herod, to take the oath of loyalty at the occasion of the census of which St. Luke speaks; Judas the Gaulonite, and the rabbi Sadok, and later, the Kanain, the Zealots; the party of armed revolution, irreconcilables, whose watchword was: No master but God! no taxes! taxes are the sign of slavery.[1]

These expected a warrior Messiah, a true King to whom God would give the power of shaking off the Roman yoke, of subduing the infidels to Israel, and of establishing the law of Moses on a whole subject world. The political absorbed the religious element; they found a faithful and clear echo in the people and in the ardent youth of the nation. At every moment they threatened a rising of the country; whenever a measure contrary to religion was taken by the Governor they were excited, fomenting everywhere popular passions with a daring which feared neither torture nor death.

Superstitions in regard to the Messiah and his kingdom flourished in their fulness in the illiterate mass. Imaginations were inflamed by reading the apocalyptic books. It was expected that a wondrous being would appear in the clouds, some said that he was even now, though hidden, ready to shine forth as the lightning, to exercise a sovereign judgment on the people overthrown by him, and that then a long era of happiness would begin. Others expected two Messiahs: one who should fight and suffer, and be conquered, another who should carry off the glory of triumph. This idea contributed not a little to excite the ambition of those unsubdued Zealots who thought themselves called to be the combating and sorrowful Messiah.

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[1] *Bell. Jud.* viii. 6; *Ant.* xviii. 1, 1.

It would, however, be an error to believe that in the time of Jesus the Jews of Palestine only saw in the Messiah an earthly hero, and in his career a political work. However powerful such an illusion might be in the cultivated class and in the multitude, it had not eclipsed the divine and religious element in the Messianic idea.

Among the documents which give us most information on the idea of the Messiah and of his Kingdom among the best Jews, we must quote the Book of Enoch, and the Little Psalter of Solomon. In the Book of Enoch,[1] greatly esteemed among those whose ideas it expressed, the Messiah was called "the Elect, the Anointed, the Son of Man," and even "the Son of God." According to the author, he was the equal of the angels, and, inasmuch as he was the Son of God, he seemed to hold, near him, the place which Philo assigned to the "Logos." The Son of Man dwelt by him who was the beginning of days;[2] he was seated on the throne of glory, by the side of God;[3] all were to invoke him, and he was to rule over all.[4] His destiny would be that of a prophet, a teacher, and a judge; in him dwelt the spirit of wisdom and understanding, truth, power, and the spirit of those who are no more. He was to be the last of the prophets; his influence was to extend to all nations, he was to be the light of the prophets and the hope of the afflicted,[1] he was to judge hidden things, on the throne of the majesty of God, and not men only, but the fallen angels, Azazel and all his hosts. After the judgment, heaven and earth would be renewed, reserved for the Messianic age, and inaccessible to sinners. The Jews of Palestine did not expect the sorrowful advent of Messiah, they had no idea of his death and glorious return; Messiah never dies, they said, but is eternal as the throne of David which he will restore.

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[1] *Das Buch Henoch*, übersetzt von Dillmann, Leipzig, 1853.

[2] *Ibid.* 46, 1, &c.

[3] *Ibid.* 55. 4; 69, 29.

[4] *Ibid.* 48, 5; 62, 6.

The same ideas, with less grandeur and purity, are to be found in the most ancient Targums, those of Onkelos and of Jonathan; we shall find in them the same causes of political and religious tumult, always active among those Jews who could not resign themselves to the failure of the sceptre of their race, and who, when they lost their independence, remembered the great prophecy of the patriarch Jacob when he died, crying aloud through all the ages: He will come, but only at the time when the sceptre shall have departed from Judah.[2]

Among the pious and peaceful, the humble and silent, the hopes of Israel kept their purity; these did not restrict nor divert the action of the Spirit by their prejudices and passions; they did not curse the Gentiles, but left vengeance to God; they knew that, according to the word of the prophets, they should be delivered from their enemies, but they did not think of reducing their masters to slavery, nor lulled themselves with vain terrestrial ambitions; they waited for the consolation of their people, and saw in the promised Messiah the advent of the Very God, Emmanuel and the Son of God; he who should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, a just judge, and the glory of his people Israel.

They did not attempt to penetrate the unknown, and understand how all this should be accomplished; the designs of God transcend our powers and are only understood when realized, for they bear their light in and with themselves. Eager souls experience the excitement of those who are consumed by impatient desire. Such a handful of men was a strange and touching spectacle before the almighty power of Rome; never had they been weaker, never had their ambition been higher. They wished for universal empire, which the Romans held themselves to possess; but while the Romans only looked for a reign of force, they wished for the reign of their God, and thronged round his temple, as round their last fortress. They eagerly asked their teachers when the Saviour should come, and the scribes answered that it was their own sins that delayed the day of deliverance and consolation; they were not yet worthy of the help of God.

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[1] *Das Buch Henoch*, übersetzt von Dillmann, Leipzig (1853), 48, 4.

[2] Gen. xlix. 10.

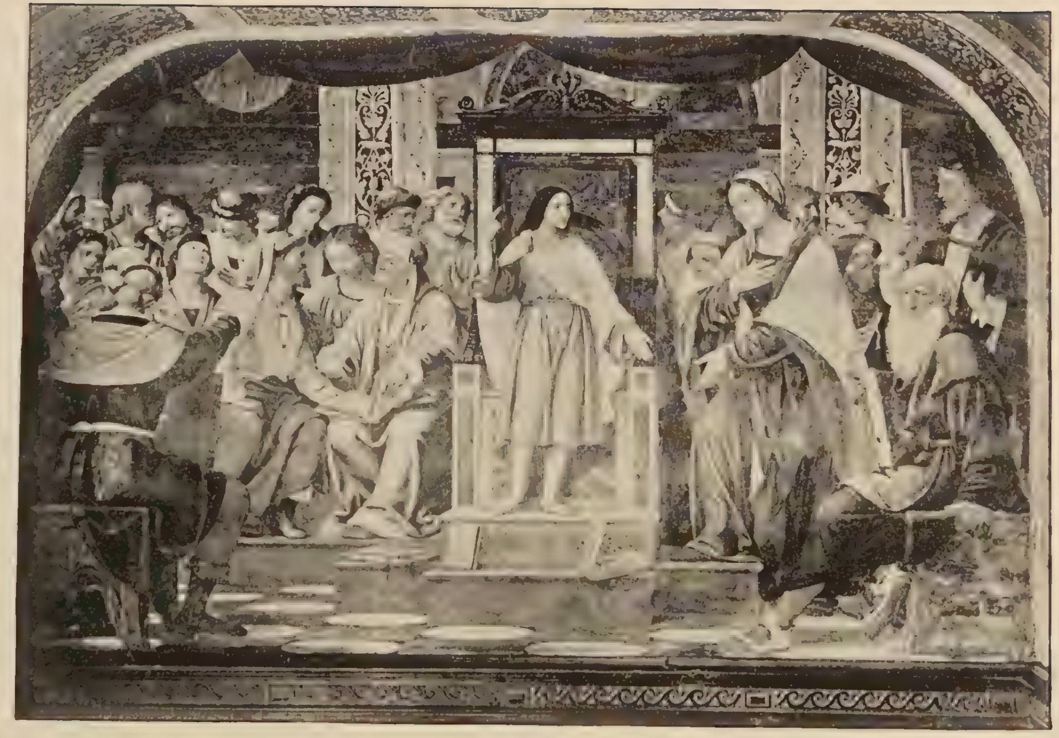
The deliverer came not. In fact the masters knew nothing; their answer was only a stupid formula intended to cover the emptiness of their thought under an appearance of religion and humility. The people were not satisfied; they were ready for a revolt at any moment, determined to follow whomsoever might lead them; their ears were open to the least appeal, to the gentlest voice. The soul of a nation is like that of an individual, it has its hours of slackness or violent tension, of calm and storm. Judah, since the deposition of the ethnarch Archelaus, was passing through one of these crises.

Then, there appeared in Israel a man destined to interpret to his country, troubled by parties, and bending under the Gentile yoke, led astray by passion and prejudice, the thought and the designs of God. He was about to make the prophets live again, though their voice had been silent for more than four hundred years, and the Pharisees thought only of building their sepulchres; he was to catch their accent, when he spoke of virtue, of the future, and of national duty; like all men sent by Providence, he was to be the genius and the conscience of a whole country, genius to see aright, conscience to command the good; he was to answer to the most earnest desires of all: hence his power; hence the extent and rapidity of his action.

Men not in touch with the life of their age are incapable of awakening any echo; the crowd neither hears nor understands them, they remain powerless and barren, as the crowd remains indifferent and absent. Those whom God sends come at the right time; earth moves beneath their step, their word has power and their works live.

John was of the race of prophets, and the greatest of all. Chosen from his mother's womb; the son of a priest, and of a priestly family, he did not grow up to succeed Zacharias in the Temple services. Custom may enchain common natures; those whom God predestines are swayed by the will of the Spirit. John certainly knew of his relationship to Jesus and Mary; it does not appear that he had ever seen him whose forerunner he was to be; but he had heard from the mouth of his mother how his own birth had been marked by divine signs, and he knew the future that was prophesied at his cradle. He lived and grew as a being set apart, a "Nazir"; no earthly influence was to touch his soul, dedicated to so high a mission.

He dwelt in the desert, listening to the inner voice of the Spirit, and growing strong by it; the vigour of his inspiration lifted him above his time and surroundings. He broke through all that hemmed him in; we do not find in him the mark of any school, the imprint of any caste, the sign of any party. Some thought that they saw in him, as also in Jesus, an Essene; but he had neither their dogmas, nor customs, nor dress, nor tendency; he did not live with others in community, he was a solitary. To find any like him, we must go back to Elijah the Tishbite and Isaiah; both of whom lived again in him; in his long years of solitude he



CHRIST DISPUTING WITH THE DOCTORS.

From the Painting by Bernardo Luini in the Sanctuary of the Virgin, Saronno was penetrated by memories of them, the figure of Elijah was to shine before him as the type of a prophet, he had the same indomitable courage, the same vehemence. The prophecies of Isaiah must have been the book he loved best; the few words which history has recorded of him recall the most eloquent and the most lucid of the Messianic prophets.

Evil grieved and angered him, for he knew its depth and horror; he did not flatter, but rebuked; did not console, but terrified; inflexible in character, he feared nothing; neither the people, nor the great, nor princes; his sincerity was unbending; he had the gift of moving and penetrating consciences; an heroic penitent, he had that austerity which impresses the crowd. No prophet ever uttered more loudly than he the word which befits nations crushed by the justice of God, "Repent"; yet this moral censor, this herald of repentance and the terrible judgment of God, never bent under the weight of the vices which he scourged, he was no despondent pessimist, but a man of hope. He saw the Kingdom of God approaching, and announced its advent; but, far from flattering his country by this news which summed up all the ambitions of Israel, he marked in a severe tone the means of obtaining it. The title of son of Abraham was of scant avail, it was necessary to have the virtues of Abraham; no good could come without the submission of man to God. He had a vivid imagination and his energetic utterances carried conviction; he had that passion for good which gives irresistible eloquence.

His whole life was a living sermon; he was bound by no ties to the degenerate world to which he brought good tidings; he did not quit the desert, he knew only the voice of God speaking to his conscience and that desolate nature which also spoke the language of God. His dress recalled that of his master Elijah: a tunic of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; his meat was locusts cooked on stones, and wild honey from the crevices of the rocks.

He drank no wine, but quenched his thirst in the mountain brook; like the prophets of the school of Elijah, he dwelt neither in the town nor in houses, but in the caves of the desert mountain.

A grotto, which was perhaps the first dwelling-place of his wandering life, is pointed out even at this day, to the west of Ain-Karim; it is hollowed out of the live rock, on the eastern flank of the valley of Beit-Anina; there is a fountain about two yards above the grotto, which waters everything around it; the grass is green, the lemon trees are in flower, and a carob spreads its dark boughs; the torrent, swollen in time of flood, murmurs at the bottom of the gorge. Opposite, on the western bank, is a little Arab village; a spring has attracted a few fellahs to that place. A little to the left, half way up the hill, is a thicket of green trees, a venerated spot where, according to the tradition of the country, the bodies of the two valiant Maccabees, slain in fight, were for a while deposited. The spot is rough and naked; the horizon walled in; the traveller feels hemmed in by the two sides of the valley which almost meet, and it is necessary to look up to heaven, which as it overarches seems to enlarge the whole. The rocks, the torrent, the sombre valley, are fully in harmony with the austere person who dwelt there. The echo of that powerful voice which cried "God cometh; prepare his ways; repent," still sounds in the desert; we seem to hear it above the roar of the wind and the murmur of the waters of Beit-Anina.

CHAPTER II.

RELIGIOUS ACTION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

THE year 27 was a sabbatical year.[1] Agricultural life was suspended, men neither reaped nor sowed; the fields were fallow; the earth, herds, and herdsmen were all at rest. The fruits grew of themselves without cultivation, and belonged to the poor, who had thus a year of liberty, abundance, and joy. The synagogues were more frequented at the feast-days and at the hours of prayer; the roads to Sion were traversed by more numerous caravans, the pulpits of the doctors were more surrounded. Less absorbed by work, the crowd which in the East loves long conversations and life in the open air, gave itself up to all the religious and political preoccupations of which the ardour was on the increase.

It was then that John revealed himself to the people. He did not appear in the public places nor at the gates of the town, he did not show himself at Jerusalem, in the squares of the Holy City nor under the porches of the Temple; the apostle remained the anchorite, under the sway of the Spirit in his desert, that Spirit of which he loved to declare himself the voice.[2] He who has not seen the land where John the Baptist arose as a prophet can scarcely understand his rude speech, his bold images, his cry powerful as lion's roar.

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[1] See Appendix A: *General Chronology of the Life of Jesus.*

[2] Isaiah xl. 3; Matt. iii. 3 and paral.; John i. 23.

The country spreads from the shores of the Dead Sea to the confines of Samaria, and is about 60 miles in length, with a breadth of not quite five miles. From the summit of the hill called Khan el-Ahmar, the red caravanserai, it resembles, in its savage grandeur, a troubled sea whose waves have been suddenly petrified. The soil is thrown into numerous hillocks, separated by little valleys ; here and there the deeper Wadys are the beds of torrents rushing from the mountains of Judaea. The Mount of Olives rises above the other hills towards the west, on the east is the deep valley of the Jordan, which lies like a gulf between the last undulations of the mountains of Judah and the high escarpments of Moab. There is scarce a tree in this blazing solitude, scarce a blade of grass on the worn rock whose chalky strata show that the soil has been upturned by volcanic eruptions. There is scarce a village ; only, far off on the west, Aboudis, and on the north Tayebeh. A long white line winds towards the Mount of Olives, and marks the road from Jericho to Jerusalem traversed for ages by caravans, which John must have often taken ; the silence is profound, the traveller feels himself alone, and overwhelmed by this nature all the more religious because it is silent and desolate. On the side of the hill a flame-coloured tint gives a strong note of colour in this desert where all is so light, and all half-tones are lost in that clearness which in the East wraps the whole immensity of earth and sky, and gives infinite sharpness and depth to the horizon.

Places have their predestined fates ; and this place suited the genius of the prophet. John wandered through it from north to south, from east to west ; his route lay by the roads from Engedi and the shores of the Dead Sea as far as Tayebeh, from the Grotto of Ain-Karim to the Jordan. He addressed his burning words to those who passed by in caravans ; he did not seek the crowd like the ancient prophets, but attracted them to him. Those who heard him were moved ;

they returned to their town or village, stirred to the depths by the words of the solitary, and in telling what had so moved them they spread his name and awakened the curiosity of the people.

Soon, in Judaea and Samaria, in Galilee and the country beyond Jordan, men talked only of John the Baptist. His past duty was clear to his conscience; he felt with a divine certainty that he was the messenger of God and the immediate forerunner of Christ: all his words breathed that conviction. The great work which God had prepared for so many years, in the secret of which he had initiated his prophets from age to age, of which Israel kept the hope and for the realisation of which it cried aloud : this work of God's bowels of mercy, the salvation of the world, "the light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of the true sons of Abraham," was about to appear. John knew and saw and declared it; he had not learned it in books, nor in the schools of the wise, nor by observing the social, political, and religious state of his nation: this son of the desert did not read, rarely studied, went not among men ; but the word of God was on him, and inspiration illumined him. Every genius rises by it, in divers degrees, according as God wills to initiate them into the mystery of his creation and of his impenetrable will. The divine light does not remain hidden in the conscience into which it penetrates, it is only given to shine out and spread abroad, and it always answers to the profound needs and troubles of the moment.

The first duty of John was to announce that the Kingdom of God was at hand. No word was more likely to strike and move; to force the attention, and carry away men's minds. At that point of extreme tension to which the ardour of hope deferred, and the sadness of an overwhelming oppression had brought the Jews, the voice of the new prophet rang out like a cry of deliverance; it marked a new and decisive page in the destinies of Israel, hope was over, and reality began to appear. The Pharisees, so often beaten and discouraged, looked sadly to the future; and, seeing their hopes always deceived, they attempted to explain the delays of God. The more eager were excited, and aspired only to break the yoke of the Gentiles by armed rebellion. They proclaimed to the people that God would only come and his kingdom be established in the days that they should shake off this impious slavery.

John was free from the uncertainty of the one party and the fanaticism of the other. The Lord is at hand, he said, and comes to reign and judge. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.[1]

Under this metaphorical and popular language he revealed the divine attributes of the Messiah, who with features at once consoling and terrible, consoling for those who were like the wheat, terrible for those empty and barren souls which he compared to chaff. His voice from time to time grew gentler, and he said of the Messiah: "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." [2]

When the crowd asked where the Messiah was, he answered again: "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."[3]

At the appeal of the new prophet, moved by the vigour of his word and the clearness of his declaration, the entire nation rose. The desert was filled with his voice, the solitary ways were blocked by the crowd which came from all parts to seek and follow after the anchorite.

It is easy to startle men, to command their attention, and excite their curiosity, to rouse their religious and political passions, but the messenger of God has a nobler ambition, he must penetrate the very depths of the soul, master the will, and carry conviction to heart and mind. Such a work can only proceed by the intervention of God. In giving to his prophets sanctity and the heroic love of good, he gives them also a voice which is vibrating with his own breath, the only voice capable of reforming, of inspiring hatred of evil, and desire for virtue. The sanctity of John shone through the whole of his being, and men saw in him one dedicated to God. The austerity of his life made him into a superhuman person; his way to the conscience was open, no prophets before him had entered it more triumphantly. The seer in him was united to the reformer, and while the seer satisfied the hopes of the people, the reformer carried them with him and taught them the knowledge of salvation.

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[1] Matt. iii. 12.

[2] Luke iii. 6.

[3] John i. 26, 27.

This knowledge, which consisted solely in the preparation for the Kingdom of Messiah, was summed up by him in two elements: one virtue, repentance; one rite, baptism accompanied by the confession of sins. In this we are far from the prejudices of the Pharisees and the revolutionary doctrines of Judas the Gaulonite and the Zealots.

Do not nurse a vain illusion, he seemed to say to all who came to him; not by legal righteousness and by observances will you render yourselves worthy of the Kingdom of God; not by armed rebellion against the Gentile yoke will you hasten the advent of the Saviour. He comes at his own time, and the time is at hand; no power can hinder God; man must wait on him, and, when he comes, must receive him.

Now, in order that the work of God may be accomplished, man must share in it, must renounce his prejudice, his vice, his passions, evil in all its forms; what John called repentance was to confess sin and do penance. Without repentance no evolution is possible in good, no transformation of the soul. This is the universal law of moral progress, and had to be announced at the very time when Christ was to work out in the world the highest evolution and the supreme transformation of mankind. It was the honour of John to have formulated this with a power which nothing can equal, at a moment unparalleled in history.

To his doctrine of repentance he added a rite which was to be its symbol and public profession. In the East, especially, nothing connected with religion is accomplished without a visible sign which speaks to the senses and strikes the imagination. In instituting his baptism, John was certain to find himself in harmony with the temperament and customs of his people, and to give to his action a new power. Yet the rite ordained by the Baptist was peculiarly his own, and must not be confounded with the daily baptism of the Essenes nor with that of the proselytes ; the one only gave an entirely legal purification which was never the object of the religious thoughts of John, the other was the sign of the incorporation of the Gentile with the people of the covenant. The baptism of John was a solemn profession of penitence, a sign of an inward ablution, and that purity of conscience without which the Kingdom of God can neither be received nor founded. No doubt it was only inspired by the very vocation of the prophet ; who came from God and imposed it as a duty on all those who awaited in righteousness the advent of Messiah.[1]

The confession of sins demanded by the Baptist before and during immersion, was familiar to the Jews. The Law, in certain cases, made this a solemn obligation. On the day of expiation the high priest, in the name of the people, laid upon the head of the scapegoat all the sins of Israel. Moses and the prophets, in their ardent zeal for the salvation of the people, were wont to carry before God the weight of their sins ; and Joel cried to the priests with a loud voice to

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[1] Mark xi. 30.

"Weep between the porch and the altar,"[1] for the faithlessness of the nation. It was a conviction rooted in the Jewish conscience, of which we find a trace in Philo and the writings of the rabbis, that penitence, joined to the confession of sins, would draw down the blessing of God, and that it was the condition of the advent of Messiah.

While at this time the Pharisees boasted their righteousness, and the Essenes their legal purity, both forgetting the law of repentance, John recalled it to the people and thus showed himself free from the errors of his contemporaries and faithful to the inspiration of the prophets, the true representatives of the Spirit of God.

After having wandered some time in the desert, preaching his doctrine, and calling the crowd to his baptism, John descended to the plain of the Jordan and the banks of the river. The plain of the Jordan[2] begins about 300 yards above the level of the sea, at the foot of the mountains of the desert of Judah, is gloomy, uninhabited, almost uncultivated. The Lake of Tiberias bounds it on the north, the Dead Sea on the south, the mountains of Moab and Ajalon on the east. The nearer we approach to the Dead Sea the more sterile is the soil. Jericho, verdant, and watered by the well which is now called the fountain of Elisha, appears as an oasis under its bananas, palms, and roses. All around the land is yellow and grey, here and there are a few zakkoum, a sort of wild olive, and thickets of a thorny shrub which the Arabs call sidr.[3] In the midst of the plain, between Judaea and Peraea, a long white line marks the valley at the bottom of which the Jordan cleaves its course, its waters flowing through a friable nitreous soil, which they have eaten away for thousands of years. This soft soil has been worn into strange and varied shapes ; we

[1] Joel ii. 17.

[2] El-Gohr, as it is called by the Arabs.

[3] The *Rhamnus Nabeca* of botanists.

may easily imagine that we see old buildings in ruin, the foundations of walls, crumbling towers, shapeless remains of a town devastated by war, by lightning, and by age. The days are burning hot, the nights warm and luminous. Long after the sun has disappeared, a gleam like the Milky Way floods the western sky, which is studded with innumerable stars. On the horizon, level with the earth, they sparkle as at their zenith, like lighthouses on the shores of a sleeping sea. Every evening clouds of birds traverse the valley with great sound of wings, the silence is only broken by them, and by the dull roar of the stream.

Such was the district traversed by John the Baptist, when he left his desert and directed his course towards the Jordan. "Make ready," he repeated incessantly, "prepare ye the way of the Lord."[1] He compared the soul to the desert which he traversed, hinting that God was about to enter the sterile and desolate soul. A road must be opened for him. "Make his paths straight," he cried, not winding and stony, as those by which we come; "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low;" you who are discouraged and cast down, raise yourselves; ye who are vain and proud, become low. Let your will be right and pure, your soul serene and rightly balanced, then you will see the "Salvation of God."[2] By this word he designated the Messiah.

His searching exhortations inspired repentance; crowds came to make public confession of their sins and to wash themselves in sign of penitence, in the waters of Jordan. Disciples gathered round the Baptist, repeated his teachings, and aided his ministry. Like all religious teachers he taught them how to pray,[3] laid upon them very severe fasts,[4] and called them to penitence and sacrifice. These were men sprung from the people whose life, become austere in the school of their master, presented a very fervent model of Jewish piety.

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[1] Matt. iii. 3.
[2] Luke iii. 6.
[3] Luke xi. 1; v. 33.
[4] Mark ii. 18.

We cannot find in the whole history of Israel, nor perhaps in that of any people, a like movement towards holiness.[1] The lower and despised classes, soldiers, publicans, tax-gatherers, and harlots, thronged round this new prophet of repentance. The priesthood seemed for a while to view his action with favour,[2] but neither the Sadducees, Pharisees, nor doctors, accepted the baptism to which John invited them.[3] The first, enemies of all novelty, disdained the rite instituted by a man whose mission they did not accept; the others, trusting to their legal sanctity, were not among those who beat the breast; always satisfied with themselves, they could not publicly confess faults to which they knew themselves strangers. The inexorable rigour of the ascetic irritated them; they soon saw in him only a fanatic given over to the spirit of Beelzebub. But popular opinion, carried away by John, received his word more favourably. It is a law of the history of the Gospel that when God works, he disdains the great and wise and turns to the ignorant and lowly; he sets aside those who believe themselves righteous and calls the sinners whose sincerity merits forgiveness.

The austere reformer grew gentle as he preached to the humble; his counsels breathed peace. He spoke of righteousness to the tax-gatherers and said: "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? "And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. And to all he said, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."[1]

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[1] Cf. *Antiq.* xviii. 1, 2.

[2] John v. 35.

Luke vii. 30; Matt. xxi. 32.

He had the gift of reading souls, and that supreme art which, joining clear-sightedness to justice and charity, knows how to speak a word in season to all. His indignation against hypocrisy and pride showed itself with implacable vigour; he one day saw mingled with the crowd many Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism, and could not contain himself, discovering hidden in the one their false piety, and in the others scepticism and Epicurean luxury. He recognised in them those envenomed tongues which dropped among the people the poison of false doctrines concerning the Kingdom of God, the expected Messiah, holiness and righteousness. His conscience was roused. "O generation of vipers," he said, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." In seeing the religious pride with which they resisted God and his justice, he added: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."[2]

Thus by the mouth of his prophet, God scourged the prejudices of the rulers of the people, making them see in the light of his inspired word the severity of that justice which no man can escape. Rome in his thought was the hand of God, menacing Israel with total destruction; and in the great day of judgment, Messiah himself was the sovereign agent of the last vengeance. Gentle towards the righteous and humble, John was inexorable to the haughty and proud. The freedom of his words spared nothing; a supernatural force animated him; so that he gained the esteem of the people and his renown increased; for there is an innate need of justice at the bottom of the popular conscience. It seems consoled when a disinterested voice declares without fear or weakness the misdeeds of the powerful; opinion bends before those who are devoured with a passion for good; sanctity raises an aureole around them, and, in spite of their worldly insignificance, they appear before the powers that be as though invested with the authority of God.

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[1] Luke iii. 11, &c.

[2] Luke iii 7-9.

From the depths of his desert this poor anchorite moved his age. Everything paled before the bright and severe figure of the prophet, whose every word was scathing to vice, called to holiness, threatened, and raised the hopes of the nation, and whose heroic sanctity gave strength to his word. Elijah had indeed come again; the multitude, which takes everything literally, believed this, and asserted it in its new enthusiasm. One of the popular superstitions of the time was faith in the return and new life of great prophets at the Messianic era: men asked themselves if John were not one of the prophets, and a few in secret pondered whether he were not the Christ.[1]

When a man arises from the midst of the people and, by the initiative of his genius or inspiration, gains for himself a preponderating moral authority, he is always disquieting to the authorities. The novelty of his word, the independence of his actions, shake the spirit of men and often give umbrage to the official representative of social and religious order. There is an inevitable conflict between the progressive and conservative forces which in turn affect mankind. John shook Jewish society too violently to escape the suspicion of the Sanhedrin. The great assembly considered itself as the guardian of the Law, and called before its tribunal all who dared touch upon religious questions without its authority: it was excited by the extraordinary influence of the Baptist. The rude eloquence with which he had belaboured the doctors and laid bare the vices of the aristocracy was the determining occasion of the action taken against him. Had John preached in the towns, or come to Jerusalem, he would have been arrested and condemned; it was judged enough to send an embassy to the anchorite, with power to interrogate him on the mission he claimed.[1] The envoys were priests and Levites, among the most rigid of the Pharisaic party.

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[1] Luke v. 15.

"Who art thou? Art thou Elias?" they asked of John. In his sincerity, without allowing himself to be uplifted by the applause of the multitude, he answered: "I am not Elias." "What then?" said the messengers. "Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." Those sent were not satisfied. The contentious spirit of the Pharisees raised a legal question: "Why then baptizest thou, if thou art not Elias, nor the Christ, nor one of the prophets?"

The doctors, in their science of interpretation, recognised that Christ had the right to baptize, according to the saying of Ezekiel:[2] "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness;" and that of Zechariah:[3] "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness;" and that of Joel:[4] "And all the rivers of Judea shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim."

Elijah, as a forerunner, had also this privilege; and it was not denied to the prophet announced by Moses; the doctrine was recognised. John said to them with that clearness which dissipates all uncertainty, and brings light into the heart of questions however confused by foolish subtleties: There are two baptisms, of water and of the Spirit. "I baptize with water," Christ with the Spirit. Christ is among you, and ye know him not. Then repeating solemnly what he had already said to the multitude, he added: "He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."[1]

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[1] John i. 19-28.

[2] Ezekiel xxxvi. 25.

[3] Zech. xiii. 1.

[4] Joel iii. 18.

We do not know the result of this attempt of the Sanhedrin; the prophet continued his penitential baptism without disturbance; increasing popular favour rendered him inviolable. It is difficult to lay hands on those whom God and the people guard and protect.

Many months had elapsed from the time that John appeared. Established on the eastern bank of the Jordan, in a desert place called Bethany, opposite Jericho, near the ford which caravans had to pass in entering the south of Peraea, towards Heshbon and Macherous, he had seen innumerable crowds pass by. Whatever success his mission might have among his fellow-citizens, however powerful the religious movement he initiated, the prophet understood that his work would only attain its highest point on condition that he might see and show to the people the expected Messiah, the founder of the Kingdom of God. He had come baptizing with water, only in order to manifest him to Israel. His eyes sought for him, his presentiments called to him, but how should he know him, and what sign would reveal him? An inner voice of the Spirit which possessed him, even from the womb of his mother, which lived with him in the desert, and placed in his mouth the burning words at which all Israel had thrilled, said to him: "He on whom thou shalt see the Spirit of God descend is he who shall baptize with the Holy Ghost."[2] And John waited for that Holy One, as yet unknown.

About the end of the year 27, perhaps in the first days of the year 28, Galilee, like all the other provinces, was filled with the name of John the Baptist; the people of Galilee, under the impulse which carried all the Jews with it, came in their turn to ask for baptism. This was for Jesus the hour of God. The carpenter of Nazareth was thirty years old; he joined the caravans of his country and descended into the valley of Jordan.

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[1] John i. 26, 27.

[2] John i. 33.

The road which leads from Nazareth to the river ford where John was preaching, is twenty-five leagues in extent; it crosses a part of the plain of Jezreel, follows the Wady Djaloud, passes under the walls of Scythopolis, follows the mountains of Samaria and Judaea, which close in the plain of Jordan to the west, then, bending to the east, it leaves Jericho on the right, descends by a gentle slope to the valley of the river, and ends at the Jordan, near Bethany, the very place that John had chosen for his baptism.

The place was full of religious memories and carried the imagination back to the greatest of the judges, and one of the greatest of the prophets. There the Israelites had crossed the Jordan dry-foot, and entered with Joshua into the promised land;[1] there the prophet Elijah, accompanied by Elisha his disciple, smote the stream with his mantle and opened a passage through its rapid waters.[2] The ford is called at the present day Maktha, or "place of passage," which corresponds well to Bethany, the "house of the boat," or Bethabara, "the house of the passage," of St. John.[3] It is situated a league and a half from the Dead Sea, and is only about ten yards broad; the river describes an abrupt curve, eating away with its waters the high rocks of the eastern bank. The other bank is smooth, green, shady, covered with willows, reeds, and tall tamarisks planted in thickets. Through the branches of these trees with their light foliage we see the arid mountains at the foot of which were Sodom, Gomorrha, and verdant Jericho. They look like a mass of cinders and calcined slag, even in January the sky is burning and the atmosphere hot. The solitude is silent, scarce broken by the cry of a few birds, flights of wood-pigeons, and the stifled murmur of the stream.

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[1] Joshua iii.
[2] II. Kings ii. 8.
[3] John i. 28.

Thither came Jesus, lost in the crowd. John knew him not, but as Jesus approached a sudden vision revealed him. Above the head of Jesus, John saw the heavens open; and the Spirit of God, under the bodily form of a dove, descending and lighting upon him.

This was the expected sign. John then understood that which no human knowledge, no genius could teach him; he must needs experience one of those unspeakable emotions which show that God is there. He saluted Jesus of Nazareth, and refused to baptize him, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him."[1]

The depth of these words is the guarantee of their authenticity; they throw an unexpected light on the soul of Jesus, they show that he had a perfect knowledge of his Messianic vocation, and that in submitting to the rite instituted by John, he already began to realise it. John obeyed and baptized him. Jesus was dipped in the water of Jordan. Scarcely had he risen from the water, and as he was praying apart from the crowd, the vision which had dazzled the Baptist was reproduced for Jesus himself. "The heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending, and lighting upon him, and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."[2]

This act inaugurated the public life of Jesus, revealed his nature, his divine calling, all his destiny and the power which was to lead him. The adversaries of the personal intervention of God will never understand its true meaning; and the Gospel history, in which this direct and personal intervention is a constant force, will be for them a closed book. From this time Jesus was no longer the carpenter of Galilee; the veil which hid him from the multitude was torn asunder: he appeared what he was, the Christ, the Son of God. Yet he was to keep in his divine grandeur, a frail nature subject to pain and death. Sinner he could never be: born of the Spirit, he was of an absolute sanctity, as the principle of the virtue in which he was conceived; but he needed to be humiliated, sacrificed, and brought to nought, his first public act was an act of abasement; lost in the crowd, he came to demand a rite intended for sinners, engaging by that act to submit to the law of penance and sacrifice, whereof the baptism of John was the symbol. Thus he fulfilled all righteousness; he was the first to submit to that law which he was about to impose upon all, as the necessary condition of entrance into his Kingdom, and he who was to save and regenerate mankind by death, began already to enter into death. That the sinner should suffer and sacrifice himself was strict justice; that the Holy One of God should subject himself to pain and martyrdom was the accomplishment of justice by love, the justice of Jesus.

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[1] Matt. iii. 13.

[2] Matt. iii. 13-17 and paral

At the moment when this submission was begun, and in virtue of that act, the heavens were opened. The very life of God impenetrable and indescribable, closed to every creature, that life from which mankind, crushed by evil, could no longer draw nourishment, showed itself taking possession of the soul of one of its children. The being predestined and unknown on whom God visibly descended was not only what he appeared to be, a son of man, but also the Son of God. The Spirit which dwelt in him, unsuspected, revealed itself solemnly and consecrated him before the eyes of the multitude; henceforward the Messiah could act.

The greatest men have only their genius, their will, and their passions; amongst the most holy, the inspiration of God is added to all these springs of personal energy, an inspiration often ephemeral, always limited, which allows the weakness of man still to manifest itself; but this public consecration revealed in Jesus the fulness of the Spirit, and this Spirit was the sovereign principle of all his thoughts and will, of his discourses, actions, and plans. Jesus was to communicate the Spirit to us. The scene of his baptism, which contains the secret of regeneration, was to reproduce itself even to the end of the world; water was to be one day, by special institution, consecrated to be the sacrament of man's regeneration, and the baptism of water was to become the baptism of the Spirit. Whoever, at the call of Christ, will quit his vices, his ignorance, and his selfishness, through repentance, sacrifice, and faith, whoever will enter into the words of Jesus, will see, like him, the gates of heaven open, the sons of earth and of corrupt mankind will become the sons of God, they will hear in the depths of their conscience the Spirit murmur this ineffable name, and they will learn of him to call God their Heavenly Father.

The Gospel narrative scarcely allows us to determine how far the extraordinary manifestations at the baptism of Jesus were known to the multitude. They seem, moreover, to have been directly addressed to the Baptist, to him who should point out the Messiah, and who found himself elevated by them to the height of his great mission. He was not wanting to his task. Occasions were to arise, and we shall hear him, usually so vehement, moderate his rude voice, and find tones of infinite gentleness to reveal his Lord and Master.

The fact of the baptism of Jesus remained profoundly engraven in the memory and conscience of his disciples. It was called the "anointing" of Jesus; the primitive apostolic teaching, as the Acts have preserved it to us,[1] speaks of it as a wondrous sign in which we are to recognise the divine justification of the Messiah. Jesus almost immediately left the place and disappeared, avoiding the curious throngs of people that flocked to the banks of the Jordan; the Spirit which filled him led him to the wilderness.

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[1] Acts iv. 27; x. 38.

CHAPTER III.

JESUS IN THE DESERT. THE TEMPTATION.

THE Gospel narratives do not precisely define the desert into which Jesus was led by the Spirit. It is certain, however, that the word ἔρημος employed by them, with the article, in the singular, and without an epithet, can only mean the desert of Judah.[1] The most ancient tradition has always sought for and venerated the traces of Jesus in the wild and mountainous region which extends to the west above Jericho as far as the heights of Bethany, is bounded on the south by the Wady-el-Kelt, and on the north by the Wady Neuahimeh.

Jesus on quitting Jordan must have crossed the plain of Jericho, and, leaving the town to the left, have climbed the steep slopes of the mountain now called the "Quarantaine." This rocky bluff is an immense mass of reddish chalk which seems to have been calcined by a fire. Its five pyramidal crests, separated by deep ravines, form an imposing whole. Wind and rain have eaten the stone, and in many places have hollowed out caves in its sides, which the hand of the solitaries have enlarged. In the middle of the highest peak, believers venerate a grotto which gave shelter to Jesus during his abode in the wilderness. A path cut out of the rock leads to it; a few Greek monks live there, above the world, with the birds of heaven, rock-pigeons, and eagles. A dazzling panorama is visible from the top of the mountain. On the east beyond the plain of Jordan, are Mount Nebo and the highlands of Peraea; on the north, Hermon, its head crowned with sunlit snow, and lost in the bright sky; to the south, the Dead Sea, shining like burnished silver; on the west, the desert-land of Judah, on whose innumerable hills the winter rains raise a little grass, to be parched by the first summer sun. Jerusalem is hidden behind the Mount of Olives, which catches the eye, crowned at present by a white tower, like a signal raised above the reefs of this ocean of stone.

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[1] Matt. iii. 1, xi. 7, xxiv. 26; Mark i. 4, 12, 13; Luke iii. 2, viii. 29; John xi. 54.

The place is at once a desert and a mountain: uniting in its grandeur both austerity and majesty. This was probably the place whither Jesus retired. The rock served him as a refuge; he was there with the wild beasts; the sky above his head was full of light and of divine voices. Amid this desolate landscape, memory alone speaks to the traveller who wanders there; it fills all things with its murmur. The image of Christ as he was in life seems to haunt these hills; we follow the inward drama of his thoughts, and gaze with veneration on the crumbling rocks on which he perhaps reposed. When Jesus looked from these heights at the plain of the Jordan which he had recently left, he might have seen the crowd thronging all the paths towards him who prepared the way; and he had under his eyes the road from Jericho to Jerusalem which, one day, he was to follow, with his disciples, on the way to death.

The sojourn of Jesus in the desert was at first prayer, contemplation, and absorption of all his human faculties in God his Father. Those who have experienced rapture and ecstasy, who have drunk long draughts of divine happiness, and have heard, like St. Paul, "the secret words of heaven which no man on earth may utter":[1] the saints, these only can see some rays from the soul of Jesus as they pray, contemplate, and adore. He saw, in the will of his Father, the greatness and beauty of his future mission; he measured its difficulties, foresaw its pains and sacrifices; on the eve of his active life, he entered into all the counsels of wisdom, justice, and infinite mercy, to save a lost world. His agony on Calvary and death revealed themselves to his eyes open to eternal light; he knew the emotions of the soul overflowing with the joys of God, and the anguish of a soul overwhelmed at the view of the frightful strife which awaited him.

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[1] II. Cor. xii. 4.

The desert has always had an irresistible attraction for religious natures, all have passed through it, as the threshold of the active life. Jesus often advised solitude, and sought it himself as a condition of prayer, as a means of rest for the spirit, and for escaping snares and persecution.[1] In retiring thither after his baptism he wished to pass, in his own way, through this phase of complete recollectedness which, in men of action, precedes the execution of their task. Whoever is conscious of a great mission, overwhelmed by the weight of responsibility, afraid of his own weakness, loves to fall back upon himself in silence. Solitude brings a man near to God, purifies his heart and thought, strengthens his manly resolutions, fosters his courage, and nurses his strength.

Moses sought for God on the solitary summit of Horeb;[2] Elijah sought in the desert a refuge from men;[3] John the Baptist lived there, growing great and strong in communings with the Spirit;[4] Paul lived apart in the uninhabited plains of Arabia, to meditate on the words of him who had stricken him to earth on the road to Damascus;[5] and the disciples of the Crucified, fleeing from the corruption of the world, absorbed in contemplation and hungering after eternal life, were one day to bury themselves there in crowds, in the holes of the rocks, in the depths of the Thebaid.

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[1] Mark i. 35. 45, vi. 37; Luke vi. 12; Matt. xiv. 13.

[2] Exod. iii. 1.

[3] I. Kings xvii. 2.

[4] Matt. iii. and paral.

[5] Gal. i. 17.

The destiny of Jesus did not call him to delay long in the desert; he only halted there; he did not come as we come to seek for God, for God was ever with him; nor to listen for his word, for this he heard everywhere and at all times, at Nazareth as by the Jordan, in the midst of a crowd as in the silence of nature; nor to ripen his Messianic plans, for these were wholly fixed in the Spirit who was his light, his counsel, his impulsive force, always and fully obeyed.

The greatest among religious men go into the desert to seek energy, Jesus retired there to show it; they seek solitude and peace, Jesus sought strife; they ask in it a refuge against evil, Jesus came there to pray, to endure the assaults of Satan and to overcome him. He who had been proclaimed by God himself to be the Son of God, could not free himself from the sad conditions of humanity; he had already made, in his baptism, a public profession of expiation and sacrifice, he was to submit himself to the law of trial, under a mysterious and difficult form which defies human reason and of which the historian must seek to penetrate the enigma.

Temptation and trial are synonymous terms; and when applied to free beings are intended to test their courage and virtue. Trial or temptation is an obstacle raised between will and duty; will which should act, duty which is the rule and end of action. The obstacle can come in the first place from our nature, which instinctively revolts from effort and pain, sacrifice and death. There is no man whom duty does not condemn to suffering and self-denial; to a large number it brings protracted pain; on some, the best and bravest, it lays the necessity of death. Such is the universal trial of every free being, who seeks for God in the accomplishment of his destiny and, in order to attain God, must sacrifice self.

Whoever has observed and analysed his own nature, can easily distinguish in the midst of his noblest aspirations, and of his soundest energies, certain disorderly powers which, for him and in him, constitute a perpetual temptation to avoid his duty and his destiny. Sensuality and pride turn us aside from God : one induces us to enjoy without measure or restraint all which flatters our earthly passions ; the other throws us back on ourselves to seek in our spirit and our will the rule of our thoughts and the force of our life. These are the two forms of selfishness which work most in our double nature : the one is the selfishness of matter, refusing to submit itself to the spirit and to God ; the other is the sensuality of the spirit, satisfied with itself, and resisting God, who is the principle of matter and spirit. Every human being whom these two forces subdue, becomes, in his own sphere, ambitious and oppressive ; he eagerly desires power, that is to say, to rule and bring into subjection, to rule in order to subdue, and to subdue in order to rule. Violence and craft, murder and lying, threats and flattery, are its code and practical science.

All the disorders of the passions come from sensuality ; all the aberrations of the spirit have their source in pride ; and sensuality and pride have their origin in selfishness or inordinate self-love, which leads man to consider himself as the centre of all things. This is the evil which eats into mankind, hinders its development and constantly troubles its peace.

The assembly of creatures living in this manner constitutes the empire of evil, which Jesus calls the world, the world which knew him not,[1] and of which he was not,[2] the world which hated him and his own,[1] and was to be for him and for them the agent of a thousand persecutions, but of which he said, "Fear it not, for I have overcome the world."[2]

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[1] John i. 10.

[2] John xvii. 16.

This sphere of corruption indeed cannot endure the man of just and holy life whose very presence condemns and irritates it; whoever is sent of God to accomplish his work in the world arouses all the forces of that kingdom whose law is selfishness, and wherein temptations arise, which, reserving their most formidable assaults for the perfect and the strong, hinder the most resolute will.

We shall never understand the extent and depth of the human trial of which the history of Jesus reveals the sorrowful mystery, if we forget that world of spirits superior to man, which yet are mingled with his earthly life.

Nothing in the universe stands alone. As the planet in its beginning, its evolution, and smallest transformations, is attached to the heavens which envelop it, so man is united by his thought, his liberty, his passions, his whole being, to spirits whose hierarchy is interposed between him and God. A thousand secret suggestions come from them; the religious teaching of the Old Testament always sought for the origin of evil among these invisible hosts. The spiritual being in whom evil has attained its highest expression, sows in man, born upright and pure, pride and sensuality, selfishness and death. The Gospels call him the Devil, Jesus named him the Evil One,[3] Satan,[4] the Enemy,[5] the Prince of this World,[6] the Prince of the Devils,[7] and a murderer from the beginning.[8] Every man is more or less conscious of his fatal attacks; the secret influence of the devil arouses all our unruly instincts and inclinations; in a world prone to vice, he exercises an influence the more to

[1] John xv. 18.

[2] John xvi 33.

[3] Matt. xiii. 19.

[4] Matt. iv. 10 and paral.

[5] Matt. xiii. 39.

[6] John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11.

[7] Matt. ix. 34; xii. 24 and paral.

[8] John viii. 44.

be dreaded the more it is hidden, and he toils unseen to establish his own Kingdom in opposition to the Kingdom of God.

Of all temptations to which mankind as a whole, and in each of its members, is subject, there is one only which Jesus could not know, that which postulates a nature disturbed by sin. There was no disorder in him, no sensuality, no pride, no selfishness, no error: evil had no hold on him. He escaped the common law; as he asserted on many occasions, but especially in his last familiar conversations with his disciples, when in words full of sadness and emotion he said to them: "I will not speak to you longer now, for the prince of this world cometh, but he hath no power over me."[1] It is as though he said: He animates the Jews, and I see them coming on me by his instigation: he has no power over me, because I am without sin.[2]

Yet if Jesus could not suffer that temptation which implies evil in the tempted; if, on account of his absolute sanctity, he never experienced the inward strife of the flesh and the spirit, the illusion, uncertainty and errors of reason, the distraction, weakness, hesitation, failings, and taints of the will, he was all the same a real man who lived and was tempted. Temptation could have for him no evil attraction, but was only a suffering and a strife, for he escapes from evil which, far from being inherent in our nature, rather diminishes and mutilates, troubles and deforms it. On the other hand he gained deeper affinities with us, in bowing himself more completely than any other human being under the temptations which assail man from without.

In proportion as the soul is raised and freed from interior evil, restrains its passions, and controls original selfishness by the love of God, pride by humility, ambition by disinterestedness, it finds inward strife give way by degrees to peace. But though it has grown in the image of Christ it has not gained repose any more than he. Then is the hour of violent assaults from without, and for Jesus, as for us, "the struggle is not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world," with evil spirits[1] who assail men, inspiring and causing great attacks. All these assaults were to burst upon him with a vehemence which renders him without a peer in the heroic race of those who have striven, suffered, and agonized for God, who have resisted the world, subdued corruption, repulsed the Evil One and broken his empire in them and around them.

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[1] John xiv. 30.

[2] Bossuet, *Méditations sur l'Evangile.*

One of the greatest troubles for a righteous and saintly man is the sight of evil and contact with the evil spirit, whatever form he assume; when our will remains firm his very presence is still torture. Jesus consented to experience this, and before, in obedience to his Father, he drank deeply of all sorrows and suffered from men persecution even unto death, we now see him yield his body over to the power of Satan, and consent to be the object of his suggestions.

From the outset of his career he found himself face to face with the principle of evil; this external struggle was the opening of his life. Universal tradition among Christians calls it especially "the Temptation"; three evangelists have preserved the account for us, one has given a short summary, the other two a detailed account.[2]

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[1] Ephes. vi. 12.

[2] Matt. iv. 1-11; Mark i. 12-13; Luke iv. 1-13. The silence of the fourth Gospel cannot weaken the authority of the witness of the synoptics, nor destroy the historical character of their narrative; the silence is sufficiently explained by the nature of the fact. The humanity of Jesus is there seen in his pain and humiliation, and therefore the temptation is not in accordance with the portrait of Jesus drawn by the evangelist. It is also to be noticed that St. John always omits what has been narrated by his predecessors when he has nothing to add to their account.

Jesus was fasting in the desert. For forty days and forty nights, like Moses and Elias, he neither ate nor drank, nor felt the pangs of hunger. All the needs of life were at rest. In a momentary freedom from this slavery, earth had no hold on him. None can tell to how great a degree of liberty, independence, and spiritual freedom, a soul absorbed by God may bring its own body. Time exists no longer for the spirit which God withdraws from all terrestrial things, from all which can change and perish, and steeps in his eternal light. However, after forty days and forty nights, Jesus became again subject to the law of mankind; the Son of God gave place to the Son of man; he felt the need of restoring his forces, and was an hungered. Then the Tempter drew near.

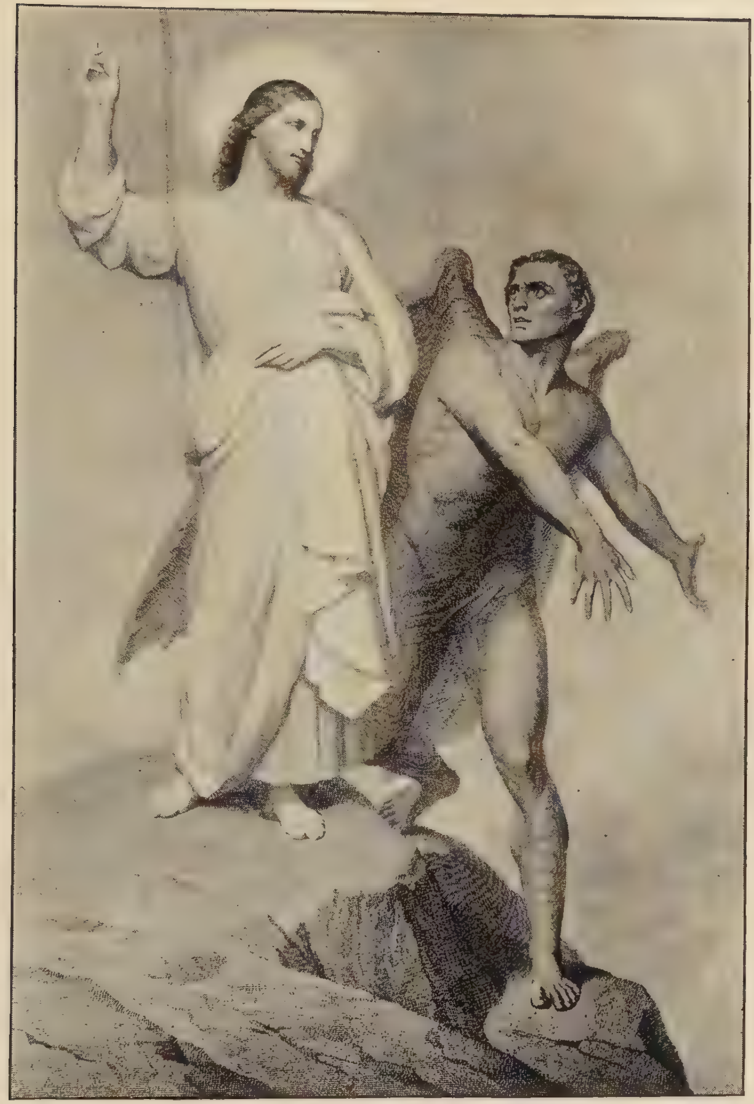
He knew not who was this new prophet on whose head the Spirit had descended and whom the voice of heaven had greeted as the well-beloved of the Father, but he perhaps suspected the Messiah in this unknown, whose appearance did not reveal but rather hid his greatness. No creature can know, without faith or a direct revelation, the unspeakable tie which binds together in Jesus the human and divine natures. The spirit of evil, negation, and calumny, the spirit of violence and craft, corruption and error, is antagonistic to all faith, and closed to every revelation; if signs awake its suspicions they do not illuminate it; it remains the radical antagonist of all who desire truth and goodness, the salvation and regeneration of man, and is consequently the born enemy of him whom it considers destined to bring to mankind the power, the light, and the peace of God; whose true name is Anti-Christ.

He craftily seized the hour when Jesus felt human weakness, and as though to oblige him to reveal himself, said: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones," of which the desert was so full, "be made bread." It was a perfidious suggestion; there was nothing more legitimate than the satisfaction of the primary need of every living creature, nor did it matter that the wilderness was uncultivated. If Jesus were the Son of God, God had only to command, and the stones would be transformed at his voice, God would hear the desire of his prophet and the rock would change to bread.

The Tempter, conscious of Messiah in Jesus, suggested to him to use his almighty power, to suspend the wise laws of creation for his own advantage and personal satisfaction ; he urged on him arbitrary and fantastic miracles. His words, perfectly honest in appearance, contained the whole spirit of evil, selfishness and sensuality, the desire to make God his servant, instead of himself the servant of God. False prophets follow this satanic counsel, subordinating to their own interests the divine power of which they boast ; instead of being faithful servants, they aspire in secret to give orders to God ; and the miracles which their historians attribute to them, always bear a magical character.

Jesus, with one sovereign word, repulsed the Tempter. "Man," he said, "doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He would obtain his food whence his Father pleased ; if it were his will that he should endure hunger, he would subdue the needs of his lower life ; the life-giving and creative word of God was able to replace bread and other food which was created to maintain life ; if it pleased God to feed him with his word, bread and created food was useless. As the true son of God, Jesus did not anticipate his Father. In spite of the needs which pressed on him, he remained in submission to order and wisdom, and gave himself up to God, who was all-sufficient.

It would seem that when man has mastered his appetites, and ceases to rely on fragile matter, when strengthened by the indomitable will which rules and guides all things, he would be sheltered from satanic suggestion. It is not so ; evil can still intrude. The soul most submissive to God falls back on itself, and in its selfishness is capable of doubt and rashness, of failure or excessive confidence ; which is the ordinary rock of false



THE TEMPTATION.

From the Painting by Ary Scheffer.

prophets. They love vain show and seek to do marvellous acts; they tempt God, making it as it were necessary to interfere for them, so that this intervention may prove to themselves that God upholds them. Here again we find that proud attempt to place God at the service of their empty thought and feeble will. Such selfishness, nakedly stated, is gross enough, but disguised as a feeling of unbounded trust, it seems a virtue, and puts on the airs of a close intimacy and familiarity with God; a snare from which even the holiest souls do not always escape.

Such was the new assault of Satan against Jesus. He intended to use against him the superhuman power of spirits. Free from all bondage to matter, having power over weight and space, he carried Jesus to the summit of the Temple, the pinnacle of one of the porches, perhaps that above the courts, whence the valley of the Kedron is visible, or on the minaret, whence the priests announced the sunrise every morning, as soon as the sky grew light behind the mountains of Hebron.

"If thou art the Son of God," he said, "cast thyself down, for it is written, God has commanded his angels to bear thee in their hands that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone." This strange attempt might have ensnared the will of one distrustful or rash, for at the bottom of every soul there is a secret egoism, which, deceiving it about its own power, urges it forward to inconsiderate acts. But the confidence of Jesus in his Father was absolute, and he acted only under his impulse, nor would he undertake any act which implied a doubt in regard to God, or an excessive confidence in his own human energy. To this perverse imitation of Satan he answered, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Perhaps also the suggestion of Satan chimed in with the thoughts of Jesus, relative to his work as Messiah and the difficulties of its execution. Every nature, however well-balanced, recoils instinctively from difficulty, pain, and sacrifice. In his life Jesus often showed the depression into which he was thrown by the mere sight of the cup which he had to drink. His mission would be shortened, if, using his power, he revealed himself by a wonderful sign. With what joy the people would salute him as the Messiah, if they saw him fall from the Temple, into the midst of the startled crowd, as if he had descended from heaven, full of power and majesty! Satan insinuated that the thing was easy, for God had ordered the angels to carry him in their hands. If thou art the Messiah, do not hesitate, make thy work easy, and dazzle the people by a sign. The answer of Jesus cut the root of the evil, and tore off the mask from the false interpretation of the great word of Scripture which shows so absolute a confidence in God.

However rough may be the road on which he orders us to advance, we are sure to find his angels to bear us up and remove obstacles; but to count on his intervention for our aid in difficulties, into which our own rashness has urged us, is to tempt his Providence. Such an act is evil, for it is always inspired by a feeling of distrust in regard to God or of rash confidence in self.

The temptation of Christ was unfolded like a drama. After the scenes of the wilderness and the Temple, came the mountain. Jesus once more gave himself up to the spiritual power of the Tempter, and was carried to a high mountain, whence the devil showed him, in the four corners of the horizon, the kingdoms and empires of the world, unveiling their earthly glory before his eyes.

Every man endowed with any activity looks upon the human circumstances under which he is to act with ambition to establish his kingdom there. The desire of power is innate, and grows with genius; the stronger a man is, the more is he carried away by this imperious tendency. Within proper control such an aspiration is legitimate; but when excessive and tyrannical it is vicious. We should misunderstand the vocation of the Messiah if we did not recognise his strong and wise desire to conquer the entire world to his faith, and to subdue mankind to God ; he holds no material sword in his hand, but the sword of the Spirit ; his is no empire like those of earth, the result of subjection, of violence and craft, but a heavenly kingdom of freedom, gentleness, and right. When Satan unfolded before Jesus what he called his empire, he endeavoured to flatter and threaten him ; to flatter by unhealthy ambition, and threaten by showing the forces which Christ had against him, if they were not for him. He showed him the dream of the false Messiahship which possessed the Jewish imagination, and whose seduction very few spirits, even among the loftiest, the most cultured, active, and religious, could escape. Satan reigned over these by this dream, and by it he attempted to gain access to the soul of Jesus.

"See," he said to him, I am the master, "I give all this to whom I will," but in order to possess such a power, it is necessary to have the spirit of evil, of deceit, violence and selfishness ; let us make an alliance ; worship this spirit, and "all shall be thine." Jesus submitted neither to the attraction of ambition nor to the fear of the adversary, with one strong word he repulsed that sacrilegious counsel : "Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

He had but one Master, he knelt before one only Lord, he knew no other alliance than union with his Father. The smallest compromise with the evil spirit is the negation of his Messianic work, whose supreme aim is to withdraw every free creature from bondage to evil, and to submit it, in righteousness, to the will of God. Beyond Jesus and those whom his Spirit guides and guards, all men have sacrificed to the false god of this world, the spirit of lying and cruelty, of selfishness and craft. The material conquest of this world is almost everywhere an homicidal work, marked by the sign of the Beast, that power of darkness which directs and tyrannises over it. Satan gives himself out here as God, and he makes those who adore him believe that, like him, they will become as gods.

To become as God is the great dream which has haunted, and the mirage which has fascinated mankind, since the first man. We are a strange and miserable divinity, when we obey the spirit of evil, instead of answering him as Jesus did, "Thou shalt worship God alone." Our proud "I" disappears, our wisdom is folly, our power craft and tyranny, our glory vanity; and our kingdom is ephemeral and deceptive, for we soon fall under the terrible reaction of all that we in our violent selfishness have subjugated and brought into servitude for a moment. Such is the history of mankind under the sway of Satan; it continues to evolve itself through the ages, powerless to destroy the work of Jesus, who only gives to his faithful a share in his divine nature, if they give up all that is evil and adore God alone.

Victorious over these three temptations, Jesus appeared in that moral beauty which was to envelop his short life and mission as with an aureole. The resolution which he had opposed to the spirit of evil was not to be shaken; what he put aside with an absolute will was put aside for ever; the three centres of desire which are never extinguished even in the best natures, were not to cast upon him even the smallest spark. The Son of God, he was never to submit, in his human nature, to material needs, and was never to employ his divine power to satisfy them; he was to endure hunger, fatigue, pain, and death; but never to ask his Father that he would lighten the weight of his destiny; and was never to tempt him; we shall never see in him any act of which the sole end was to exhibit his divine sonship to the eyes of the people. The people were to demand of him a sign from heaven, but he was to refuse it as an inspiration of Satan, giving them in one firm and mysterious sentence, the sign of his death and his future resurrection. Up to that time he was rather to accept the condition of all men, and if he freed himself from it, it would never be to give himself the satisfaction of feeling the arms of his Father round him, but to bring men to the faith, to instruct, heal, and save them. He was never to risk his life by rashness, but to rule it by the laws of perfect wisdom; humble and gentle, he was not to be uplifted by confidence, but rather escape from his enemies by flight, not delivering himself up to them till the day when the will of his Father imposed it on him as a duty. He was to destroy unmercifully all earthly ambition, never listening to the prejudices of his people, nor to the timidity of his disciples, nor to the counsels of human wisdom, to found his Kingdom and accomplish his work, and since his work was to establish the Reign of God, he was to adore God alone

The whole nature and genius of evil may be learnt in this sorrowful page of the life of Jesus. Man can there learn the terrible force against which he must measure himself in order to fulfil his duty and his destiny here below. Evil is in him, inherent in his very nature, his faculties, and instincts, in the matter of which he is formed, in the hunger which sways him from his earliest breath, whose tyrannic appeals are made known to him by his passions; it is in that ineradicable pride which separates him from God, invites him to vanity and ostentation, to all which can nourish his self-love; it is in that ambition for power and rule, for making himself the centre of a kingdom in which he will have absolute power, in that practical negation of God whose place he desires to usurp, in that idolatry which has for its end the deification of himself and his errors, his passions and vices.

All these methods of the evil spirit are manifest. The assaults which Jesus was willing to undergo are renewed in the life of each man, and of all mankind. Man is at strife with Satan, whose suggestions embrace the whole earth, the desert in which we are given over to temptation. The same craft, the same false wisdom dazzles us by its magic, flatters our lower nature, and seeks to bring it under subjection. The Evil One insinuates himself even into the most perfect, those who live trusting in the Providence of the Father; in order to seduce them he usurps the words of God, and changes their meaning; he seeks to subdue their courage, persuading them that as God can do all things, they may face every danger; he fascinates us by the dreams of ambition, he lifts us above ourselves, as he carried Christ to an high mountain, and promises us glory and power, but always on the sole condition that we obey and adore him. These three temptations embrace all our actions in our relations with matter, with God and our human surroundings. Jesus had consented to know and to conquer them all. Thereby he resembles us, especially in that he realises in its fulness our true human nature, and remains the eternal type of those who are tempted. "For," as said that apostle who best understood his Messianic character: "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."[1]

The spirit of evil had not taken possession of him, but had retired for ever; the personal struggle was not to be renewed.[2] No direct power was ever afterwards given to the devil over Jesus;[3] he trembled before him, and cried out as he approached; "Son of David, wherefore hast thou come to torment us before the time"[4] by tearing away from us the bodies and the souls of men?

Jesus, after these sad hours, was sensible of divine joys: "The angels came," says the Gospel, "and ministered unto him"; the spirits of God were always at his command; they withdrew in the moment of temptation, and at the will of their Master; but Satan once repulsed they reappeared. Intermediaries between man and God, these heavenly messengers bring us the power and joy of God as aether transmits the light and heat of the sun through space.

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[1] Heb. iv. 15.

[2] Matt. iv. 11.

[3] Luke iv. 13

[4] Matt. viii 29.

Jesus lived accompanied by their invisible host, he saw them watching from on high over little children,[1] he knew that they were ready to serve him,[2] by them he wrought his deeds of mercy and power, by them he healed the sick, expelled demons, converted sinners, fed the multitude; and yet, even when he might have done so, he did not ask his Father to send their faithful legions to his succour;[3] he lived in self-forgetfulness, without ever mitigating the burthen of our human nature of which he had taken on him all the sorrow. For him, as for us, life is composed of sorrows and joys, terrible trials and intoxicating triumphs. Joys are short, a brief truce in the midst of strife, but enough to keep our will exercised. Born of trials, they increase with trial; they are balm and oil; they heal the sores of the wounded soul, and are unction to the athlete to prepare his limbs for more strenuous combat. Those who have experienced the consolation, serenity, and holy emotions which God has infused into the soul of his martyred servants, will realize the full meaning of the words which close the account of the temptation of Jesus.

This fact, so mysterious in its whole and in its details, has been profoundly misunderstood by all those modern historians whose criticism rests on the denial of the supernatural. The apparition of evil as a personal being, the magical power which he used, the wondrous translation of Jesus by the Tempter to the pinnacle of the Temple, and then to the top of a mountain, the coming of the angels to minister to him after the devil had been vanquished, are too much for a Godless philosophy, and for materialistic science.

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[1] Matt. xviii. 10.

[2] Matt. xxvi. 53.

[3] Cf. Chrysost., *Homil. in opere imp. super Matt.*

Yet, a true criticism does not allow us to give any other explanation of the narrative of the Temptation than that given above. We falsify everything as we please, if once we deny the objective reality of its scenes, and discover in it only an inward vision created by the imagination of Jesus.[1] It is mere childish absurdity to suppose, with the older German rationalists, that the devil was only a crafty ambassador of the Sanhedrin, some skilful and powerful Pharisee, charged to turn Jesus aside from his mission, playing with him the part of Satan.[2]

Others have seen in it only a parable intended to teach man the art of overcoming temptation; that Jesus told it to his disciples, who, misunderstanding him, turned it into history. But Jesus never made himself the subject of his parables, and if he did not bring himself on to the scene when he told the story, no one can explain how they substituted their Master for the fictitious person of the original story.[3]

The mythical school[4] has seen in it mere legend; searching the Old Testament it has made reiterated attempts to show how the first Christians conceived and built up this account. It has recalled to mind the temptation of our first parents in Eden, that of Abraham, that of the people of Israel in the wilderness, in order to find a model for the temptation of Jesus. It has appealed to abstract ideas of the opposition between the Messiah and his adversary, an opposition which would necessarily create the image of a strife between the two and the defeat of the latter. Nor, in order to explain the scene of the struggle, has it forgotten to recall the fact that the desert was held to be the home of demons. But it is manifestly impossible to construct by mythical processes, the drama of the three temptations, with its lofty moral ideas.

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[1] St. Cyprian et Theod. de Mopsuestia.

[2] Paulus, *ad. h. l.*; Herder, *Christ. Schrift.* B. 2.

[3] Baumgarten-Curcius, *Bibl. Theol.*, sec 40; Schleiermacher, *Schrift. des Luk.*, p. 54.

[4] Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, t. i.

The critical school in France has given itself less trouble; having been ready to recognise the historical character of the sojourn of Jesus in the wilderness and his rigorous fast; but the imagination of the disciples alone invented the trials which he endured in that terrible country; and they created the legend.[1] This is an arbitrary hypothesis supported by no document, and which therefore has no other value than that of an expedient for getting rid of facts which do not tally with the philosophy of the writer. History thus treated is only a shifting ground which fails beneath our feet; no facts remain of which it is composed, except those which have found grace with capricious judgments and personal systems.

By what strange aberration could the apostles have allowed themselves to dream thus of their Master? It would have been repugnant to them, and almost sacrilegious, to admit that the Son of God was subject to the power of the Tempter. Reality alone could have affected them, and since such scenes have been believed, told, and written, they can only be explained by the admission that such scenes really took place. The sombre and sorrowful side of the life of Jesus was only with difficulty and by degrees understood by his disciples; who needed the education of the Spirit of God to enable them to understand a suffering Messiah; now the temptation of the Messiah is one of the first and deepest manifestations of the mystery of his sorrow.

The more recent representatives of the critical school in Germany[2] have also rejected the letter of this history, judging it unworthy of Christ, and the details unacceptable by enlightened reason. They have treated it as popular fiction, endeavouring to describe awkwardly, and under a gross form, the struggles which Jesus underwent, either at the beginning or in the course of his career. According to them, two questions must have agitated the soul of Jesus: the duty of playing the part of Messiah, and the choice of the necessary means. They have chosen to see in these two questions the subject of those inward conflicts through which Jesus laboriously arrived at the complete understanding and accomplishment of his destiny. But the Gospel documents do not show the smallest trace of these human infirmities. The Christ whom they thus describe is not the Christ of history, but belongs rather to fantastic criticism; he may resemble man such as we know him in ourselves, weak in spirit, and weaker still in will, but he is not the type of man whom the Gospel has revealed and whom Jesus realised.

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[1] Renan, *Vie de Jésus*.

[2] Keim, *Geschichte Jesus von Nazara*, B. I, *ad. h. l.;* Schenkel, *Das Characterbild Jesu*. p. 50.

The formal, detailed, and fundamentally concordant witness of St. Matthew and St. Luke does not allow us to deny the reality of a narrative whose origin can be ascribed to none but Jesus himself. It is difficult to say at what moment in his life he told his disciples what he had suffered, at the outset of his career, in that solitude which was itself his first temptation. We have no precise indication, but it was perhaps at that farewell Passover wherein so much sadness and love took possession of his soul, and opened it to his disciples in his last confidences. "You call me Master and Lord," he said to them, with other touching words, "and so I am." And now, if I have never left the course set out for me, in spite of temptation and trial, neither must you leave it. "I have given you an example."[1] And at that same hour when, thinking on the terrible trials which were to burst on his disciples, he reassured them, saying, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."[2] This was surely an allusion to his sojourn in the desert, where he had indeed overcome the prince of this world, he who puts in motion all the bitter hatreds constantly directed against the work and the disciples of Jesus.

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[1] John xiii. 13.

[2] John xvi. 33.

The baptism and temptation succeeded each other in fact as in the narrative of the evangelists. These two inseparable events which explain each other by contrasts and comparison are the true introduction to the life of Christ. The first was the manifestation of the Spirit of God, the other that of the spirit of evil; the first shows us the divine sonship of Jesus, the other, his human nature, dedicated to strife and trial; one reveals to us the infinite force with which he was to act, the other, the obstacles which he must overcome; the one teaches us his inner life, the other, the law of his action.

These two spirits are at work in each man and in all mankind, and by their incessant strife cause the great tumult of history. Jesus possessed the former in all its fulness, and was the absolute enemy of the other. His constant aim is to secure in man the triumph of the spirit of good, and the defeat of the spirit of evil. Whoever will obey the former must receive it from Christ, and whoever will conquer the second must ask power from him. Such is the greatness of Jesus, according to the witnesses of his life, those who have sketched it, at the outset of its career, in these two sacred scenes.

Jesus is without equal among the sons of men; for no other is the "Son of God," and no other escapes the attempts of evil. He is our type and our strength; we must strive to be like him, and can only conquer by him. His divine sonship and his absolute sanctity thus shine forth at the outset of his career, lighting up the whole mystery of his work, deep as the designs of God, vast as humanity, austere and heroic as the sacrifice it demanded from its author.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE PUBLIC LIFE.

THE beginning of the public life of Jesus embraces a period of fourteen to fifteen months, from the day when he left the wilderness, a little before the Passover of the year 28, to the imprisonment of John the Baptist,[1] about the feast of Purim in the year 29. The three first Gospels make this last event, which finished the mission of the Forerunner, the starting-point of the apostolate of Jesus, and of their own narrative.[2] They are silent about the earlier phase which their history presupposes, it would be totally unknown to us if the author of the fourth Gospel had not, in completing the accounts of his predecessors, told us certain striking facts which marked its character. According to his plan, he shortly indicates the various journeys of Jesus, fixes the hours and days, recalls at length intimate conversations which seem to have been held with him alone, since he alone has recorded them. In these pages the narrative is evidently personal; the soul of Jesus breathes through the authors, he always effaces himself, not even naming himself, and we hear, not himself, but his Master.

John the Baptist, by his energy and his roughness, reminds us of that violent wind which, in Elijah's vision on Horeb went before the passage of Jehovah, tearing the mountains and breaking the rocks. Jesus was the still small voice, the very breath of God. His first manifestations were full of calmness and peace, gentleness and reserve; with one single exception, there is nothing either vehement or remarkable in his action.

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[1] See Appendix A, *General Chronology of the Life of Jesus.* II. *Inauguration of his Public Ministry in Galilee.*

[2] Matt. iv. 12; Mark i. 14; Luke iv. 14.

After his fast and temptation in the wilderness he returned alone to the banks of the Jordan, in the neighbourhood of Bethabara, where John, since he had baptized him, bore witness to him without ceasing. His meeting with Jesus, the view of the opened heavens, the voice of the Father, and the visible descent of the Spirit on Messiah, had given greatness to the prophet; who was no longer only the austere preacher of repentance, the stern ambassador of the justice of God, the zealous Baptist, but the first evangelist of the new time. That which the prophets, his ancestors, had perceived from afar, he saw and touched, and published; the light of God revealed to him its mystery, and he ceased not to proclaim it to the multitude.

This progressive evolution of the religious action of John has either been rendered unnatural, thrown into the shade, or suppressed, by those modern historians who reject the precious documents of the fourth Gospel. This great figure, under their pen, has lost his most original features: the perfect mixture of power and sweetness, severity and unction, holy anger against evil and sympathetic tenderness, indomitable righteousness and self-denial. It is not the fact, as certain writers have dared to say,[1] that Jesus was under the influence of John and his ministry, to the detriment of his own character, but rather it was John who underwent the influence of Jesus. The sight of the Saviour drew from him profound cries of anguish and sorrow.

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[1] Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, p. 119.

One day John saw Jesus coming towards him from out of the shifting crowd. It was after the fast in the wilderness and the temptation. Jesus perhaps appeared overwhelmed by the sadness of his heroic mission. The prophet, who thought only of him as he pointed him out to those standing by, cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."[1] Such was the first name given to Jesus on his entry into public life; no other expressed so well the outward form and the inward character of him who, dedicated by God to sacrifice, had said to John, "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

The vocation of a man forms his soul, is engraved upon his features and his mien, and profoundly impressed upon his whole being: that of Jesus, sorrowful and holy above all others, enveloped him with humility and tenderness, and made of him the gentlest among the sons of men. He was truly the Lamb of God.

In calling the Messiah of Israel by this sad and mysterious name, John showed himself superior to the current notions of his time. The second Isaiah spoke like the first; the prophet of penitence recalled the prophet who, six hundred years before, had been the evangelist of the suffering Messiah: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."[2]

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[1] John i. 29.

[2] Isaiah liii. 2-7.

The great conscience of John, who had so vigorously denounced the corruption of the world, and preached repentance in such urgent tones, now understood where true righteousness abode; and the same man who, in the light of God, had seen the terrible truths of judgment, now saw, in yet brighter light, the innocent victim who was to atone for and purify mankind.

He stripped the veil from the Pharisees, who had so long deceived themselves about the practices of their law and their empty righteousness. He seemed to say to them, "Not the blood of your lambs, sacrificed twice each day in the Temple on the altar of sacrifice, can purify the people; the true Lamb is here." And taking up again his favourite theme, he constantly repeated his declarations concerning Jesus, like a man absorbed by one thought, one irresistible conviction. He said to the multitude, pointing out Jesus to them, "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."[1]

These constant and eager declarations unveiled the soul of the Forerunner, and proved the resistance which his words encountered in the hardened hearts of the people. Whatever was the ascendency gained by John the Baptist, it does not seem that his doctrine of the Messiah had reached the conscience of the Jewish people, nor uprooted their Messianic prejudices, but it must at least have touched some simple souls, and it finally drew, little by little, the attention of all to the Elect of God, whom no visible sign pointed out for the admiration of the crowd.

The scene of the baptism and those great things concerning Jesus which the prophet said, only served to render the mystery of the Kingdom more impenetrable. It was not clear how this humble workman of Galilee, this Nazarene, could be the Messiah, the hope and salvation of Israel. Jesus had not declared himself; the crowd passed by him, marvelling or distracted, curious and ignorant; they gazed, but perhaps failed to understand.

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[1] John i. 33-34.

Meantime Jesus had not left the banks of the Jordan. On another day he was walking by the river at sunset, when the multitude had dispersed, and John was there with two of his disciples. Looking at the Saviour as he walked, the same impression that had seized him the evening before again came upon him, and drew from him the same cry, "Behold the Lamb of God."

The word of John was heard by the two disciples; the tones of their master moved them, the sight of Jesus drew them, they left their master and followed Jesus. "Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, which is to say, being interpreted, Master, where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour."[1]

He who sketched this picture with so delicate a touch, such sobriety, and wonderful freshness of colouring, was one of those disciples who went to the home of Jesus; that date he never forgot; he remembered the hour of that meeting, in the evening when the light grew pale, when silence and calm favoured intimate conversation. He did not name himself, but we guess from his very reserve that he was John, the beloved disciple, the first who was chosen by Jesus. He too was of Galilee, the son of a fisherman, and himself a fisherman. What he heard from the lips of his Master during that night and day, has remained a mystery. No doubt they spoke of the Kingdom of God, of the hope of Israel, of the salvation of the people, and of him who, bringing salvation, should answer to that hope and found that kingdom. But, after all, what matters the words that were spoken; presence alone often says more than long discourses: a master mind, living, intelligent, and loving, is able, even in silence, to exercise influence on and to take captive those who are near.

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[1] John i. 36 and following.

One word clearly shows us that Jesus exercised a profound charm upon his two guests; his word enlightened them; they believed in his person and in his mission. In fact the next morning, one of them, Andrew, also a Galilaean and a fisherman on the lake of Tiberias, went to seek his brother. His enthusiasm passed all bounds, and he needed someone to share it. As soon as he met Simon, his brother, he said: "We have found the Messias;" and he brought him to Jesus.[1] Jesus looked at him keenly and said: "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." In giving to the new-comer this name which foretold so much, he designed to appropriate him at once, and marked him with a sign; he allowed the son of Jonas to see how deeply he read his mind, but without yet revealing to him the destiny covered by this mysterious name. It was enough for Peter to feel himself bound to him who began to show himself to them as the Christ.[2]

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[1] John i. 40 and following.

[2] The German critics who constantly set the synoptics against the fourth Gospel, sacrificing either the synoptics to St. John or St. John to the synoptics, according as they choose, have committed, as we think, a great mistake. They have confused the account of the vocation of the disciples as it is related in Matthew iv. 18-22, Mark i. 16, &c., and Luke v. 2-11, with the account of St. John, and they have chosen to see in it the same fact differently related; only it has been easy to them to mark out different positions, and, indeed, contradictions.

An impartial study of the two texts does not permit us to believe that they are regarding the same fact. The calling of the first disciple, as told by St. John, is absolutely distinguished, both by time and place, and indeed by details, from the second calling told by the synoptics. The two facts complete and explain, but do not destroy each other. Neither must be sacrificed to the other, though they must be compared. Here, as in many other circumstances, St. John completes the synoptics.

The power of God, obedient to the laws which it has laid down, which orders the movement of the whole creation, is never hurried and never violent; all is silent and secret in the first manifestations of a world in course of formation, and of a being about to be born; we are allowed to see the first movements of the living spirit of Jesus. To live, for him as for every being, is to draw to himself and assimilate other beings; we see him exercising a powerful attraction over a few chosen and predestined souls; they silently joined themselves to him one after another; the grain of mustard-seed does not grow more tranquilly.

At the bottom of the Jordan valley, hollowed like an immense furrow, under the burning sky, at the very place where the word of John the Baptist leavened the conscience of Israel, we catch the first radiance, and see the first development of the Messianic power of Jesus. He had now three disciples. On the afternoon of the day on which he had called Peter to him, he looked towards Galilee, which he had not seen since his baptism, and desired to return there. He was on the way, when he met another Galilaean, Philip, a countryman of Andrew and Peter, inhabiting, like them, the little village of Bethsaida, on the shores of the lake. Jesus drew him by the simple word, "Follow me."[1] The call of Jesus has something at once gentle and irresistible; it touches and attracts the heart; Philip shared the dawning faith and enthusiasm of his companions, and meeting a certain Nathanael,[2] the son of Tolomeus, he said to him: "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." The name of Nazareth gave offence to Nathanael, as he asked with rough frankness: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

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[1] John i. 43, etc.

[2] Universal tradition has always identified Nathanael and Bartholomew Nathanael was his proper name, Bartholomew (Bar-Tolmai) the name of his family. In the catalogue of the twelve apostles, St. Matthew x. 2-3, Philip and Bartholomew are always joined together. Interpreters have been almost unanimous in recognising the Nathanael of St. John in the Bartholomew of St. Matthew and the synoptics.

Galilee, because there was a mixture of Gentiles with the Jewish population, was despised by ardent Pharisees. "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet,"[1] they said; the word had passed into a proverb, and Nazareth, an obscure town, unknown in the Scripture, was the particular object of this pious contempt of the orthodox. Philip, in the first ardour of his faith, and yet under the charm of Jesus' words, did not try to refute Nathanael; deeds have more effect than words; it was enough to say, "Come and see."

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."

The narrative gives us clearly to understand that Jesus' powers of knowledge were not tied to the normal conditions of presence and external sign. Jesus had seen Nathanael from afar and divined his most intimate thoughts. He was reading, or perhaps praying, seated under the fig-tree, according to Jewish custom. The Prophet allowed him to see, although the narrative says nothing of it, that he had read his conscience. From that moment he did not argue; as great in his faith as he had been sincere in his objection, he cried, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."[2] Jesus was touched by this straightforward answer. "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these." Then, turning to Nathanael, but addressing all, and using a formula which he employed when he would instruct his disciples on the things of God: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and

[1] John vii. 52.
[2] John i. 49.

descending upon the Son of man."[1] Mysterious words, full of infinite hope. Jesus knew that no man could grow great without hope, and he allowed this hope to shine before the eyes of his new disciples.

They were neither to be astonished nor alarmed at the weakness of the Son of Man, the carpenter of Nazareth, the true Patriarch; for heaven, though closed elsewhere, had been opened above his head; the angels had brought him the power and the light of God. The communication was constant and complete; all his humanity tended towards God, and divinity was poured upon him. This obscure formula, these hidden expressions, translating to the disciples the unspeakable relation between their Master and the divine world, promised them that they should be the witnesses of a life of which no human word, even if inspired, will ever succeed in sounding the depths.

The faith of these first novices in the Messiahship of Jesus was, in spite of its sincerity and enthusiasm, very far from perfection. These children of the people were not yet freed from the prejudices of their time and their nation; in uniting themselves to Jesus by a movement of sympathy and joyous confidence, they chose, no doubt, to see in him the Messiah of their dreams. Man's ideal is far from the intentions of God, but illusions disperse in proportion as the soul grows. These simple Galilaeans were one day to learn in the school of their Master, better than all the sages and doctors of Israel, the mystery of Christ, the nature of his Kingdom, the necessity of his sorrows, the secret of his lowliness, the eternity of his triumph. But for the time they were full of joy at having found the Messiah, as they said; and we cannot but admire the youth and joyous courage of those uncalculating spirits, who did not resist his attraction, and had the glory of calling themselves his first conquest.

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[1] John i. 51.

Since Jesus had quitted Nazareth to receive the baptism of John some serious events had taken place. God himself had manifested himself in him, and consecrated his Elect before the face of all people. The new prophet, whose influence all felt, to whose action all submitted, had publicly pointed him out as Messiah and the Son of God. Although he seemed, in retiring to the desert, to flee from the sight and throngs of men, it was not possible but that his name should have filled Palestine, and passed from mouth to mouth in that Jewish society which was thrilled at the very idea of the advent of Messiah.

When Jesus returned to Galilee, followed by a few unknown disciples, his reputation had preceded him ; but the little town of Nazareth did not welcome the popular reports, which were loud in the praise of the carpenter's son, as he was called Even later, when Jesus had justified his mission by signs and wonders, his obscure origin, his station as an artisan, and his unlettered condition, remained a scandal to the Nazarenes. Envy, jealousy, all the mean passions and little prejudices of the village, were to blind them to the end ; for all that narrows the heart closes the mind.

But if Jesus was misunderstood in the spot where his infancy and youth had passed, he must have been received with great emotion by his mother, when she saw him whom she had borne and nursed, at the very time when he was now at last about to realise all her mother's hopes, which had been so long buried in her heart. No one better than she understood their mystery ; indeed, her only occupation was to follow her son, with those women who were to minister to him and accompany him in his journeys ; but in spite of the shadow into which she was to withdraw, his words, acts, and intentions, in fact the whole life of Jesus, his sorrows and his triumphs, were to find in no other creature a more ardent acceptance, a more faithful echo.

The Gospel gives us some information of the road by which Jesus and his first disciples went up from the valley of Jordan to Galilee, whether he went to Nazareth by way of Scythopolis, or direct to Cana. The distance between Bethabara and Cana is more than twenty-five leagues; the journey of Jesus must have been rapid, for the third day after the call of Philip,[1] we find him in the little town of Cana, where his mother had preceded him. She was there, in the house of relatives or of friends; perhaps, after the departure of her son for his baptism, she had left Nazareth and sought their hospitality. We may suppose from the silence about Joseph, her husband, that she had become a widow, and, since her loss, had lived alone with Jesus. On Joseph's side she had many kinsfolk; and it is very likely that, in her solitude, she had been received by some of her relatives.

The name of the little town is carefully pointed out by the fourth Gospel, which calls it Cana in Galilee to distinguish it from another Kana in the neighbourhood of Tyre. Eusebius has confounded the two.[2] It is situated two hours' journey from Nazareth,[3] on the road to Tiberias, not far from the highway between Ptolemais and the cities on the lake of

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[1] John ii. 1.

[2] Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, *Kana*.

[3] Some doubt has been thrown on the authenticity of Kefr-Cana as the place of the ancient town where Jesus changed the water into wine, and it has been attempted to find the true Cana in Kana-el-Djelil, situated nine miles to the north of Nazareth, and five and a half miles from Sephoris. That is the opinion of Robinson, "The Biblical Researches in Palestine," vol. ii., page 347. An attentive examination of the witness borne by almost all early pilgrims, from the sixth to the fourteenth century, from Anthony of Plaisance to the Dominican Ricold, does not allow us to agree to this; moreover, there is nothing in the formless ruins of Kana-el-Djelil to bear any trace to the fact in the Gospels. Excavations at Kefr-Cana have brought to light the foundations of the church at the time of Constantine, as is proved by coins discovered there; and all the Christians of Palestine, both schismatics and Catholics, venerated this church as being that which St. Helena constructed at the place in memory of the miracle of Cana.

Gennesareth. It was not without some importance, if we may judge by the extent of the ruins which cover the hill on the slope of which it is built. It is now only a miserable village, a heap of poor cottages; but Jesus has immortalised it by staying there. The remembrance of him has survived its overthrow; there, as elsewhere, a poor church, reared on the ruins of St. Helena's basilica, witnesses, after nineteen centuries to the unfailing vitality of the words and deeds of Jesus.

On the very evening that the Master arrived there a marriage was celebrated in one of the houses at Cana; and, according to the Jewish custom, even among the lower classes, such feasts lasted for several days. Jesus was invited with his disciples; the house was full of guests; for Eastern hospitality knows no bounds. It is not, however, the custom that women should take their place at table; they remain apart from the men, preparing the food, and overlooking the service, but they come and go in the guest-chamber. One circumstance gave some trouble at the end of dinner. They had no more wine, which, as says Bossuet, is called "the soul of banquets." Perhaps Mary had supplied the wine herself, for it was the custom among the Jews, when invited to a nuptial feast, to bring food as presents, wine and oil and fruits. The guests were numerous, the provisions gave out. Mary saw the embarrassment of the newly-married pair, and, in her anxious eagerness, thought at once of her son. She came to him and said, "They have no wine."

The answer of Jesus leads us to believe that other feelings were in her heart, that she thought of the glorious words which had been said of her Son, that she wished him to seize this occasion to manifest his power, that she let him see by her looks and gestures all that was in her mind. He, always master of himself, and calm with the calmness which nothing earthly disturbed, gently put aside his mother, moderated her eagerness and her charity, and with the gravity of one who, in his divine mission, never obeyed any earthly motive or sentiment, but his Father alone, he said: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come."[1] These words recall those of his twelfth year, when he said to his mother, sorrowful at having lost him and reproaching him for having left her, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"[2]

A mother's heart is seldom at fault, and in spite of the affectionate reproof of her son, Mary did not lose confidence, she understood that her wish was fulfilled, and in calm reliance on the bounty of him who could refuse her nothing, and sure of him as she was of herself, she said to the servants, "Do whatever he shall command you."

"And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast[3] had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: but the servants which drew the water knew; the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

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[1] The Hebraism *mah-li valeka* corresponds to the Greek τί ἐμοὶ και σοὶ, and is often used in the Old Testament to express surprise mingled with displeasure. Saint Chrysostom (*Homil.* 20 *In Joann.*) renders it by "*Quid me molestas?*"

[2] Luke ii. 49.

[3] The duties of the ἀρχιτρίκλινος at banquets consisted in superintending the ordering of the feast, and giving directions to the servants; he was an invited guest, a friend of the bridegroom. At marriage-feasts, he had to receive the guests, and to say grace before and after the meal, blessing the different meats. This is why it was to that officer that Jesus ordered the water to be taken after it was turned into wine. This also accounts for the tone of equality and familiarity in which he addresses the bridegroom.

The disciples of Jesus were struck with this miracle; it was the first time that their Master had revealed to them his power; they thought of those mysterious words which he had said to them a few days before, in allusion to the miracles with which his life was filled, and they felt their faith in him increase.

I have kept in this narration the simplicity, liveliness, and richness of detail which the faithful pen of St. John has given to it; there was nothing more ordinary in appearance than this wedding feast in a little Galilaean town, but the presence of Jesus has transfigured it, and it has remained in Christian memory, as a symbol, which allows the faithful to see in it ineffable mysteries. Jesus increased and immortalised all that he touched, his least acts were a living word which the ages were to keep and echo.

The Kingdom of God which he was to found is a wedding feast between God and mankind; Christ is the eternal spouse who calls every human soul to his divine betrothal; the water changed into wine is the image of that transformation of our nature by the virtue and the intoxicating power of the Spirit; the woman, the mother who cried, "They have no wine," and appealed with confidence to Jesus, is the voice of all those who have felt the insufficiency of life, the weakness of mankind and of the whole creation, of those who have cried to God, and whose prayer God always heard at the chosen hour, but often too slowly for their own desire.

This miracle was done in secret. The master of the feast was not even aware of it. Jesus, in the early period of his public life, avoided all publicity, kept aloof from the crowd, and remained hidden in the intimate circle of his own people, his mother and his near friends. He had his disciples above all before his eyes. It was for them, the first who were admitted into his familiarity, that he acted; to them he revealed himself; nothing shows better how fully he was in possession of his divine power than the gentleness and the infinite calm with which he carried out, without hasting and without resting, the will of his Father. In the peaceful beginning of his ministry, tranquil as the dawn of an Eastern day, there is no foreshadowing of the storm in which it closed.

Jesus remained but a short time at Cana, nor did he return to Nazareth, but went down to Capernaum, accompanied by his mother, his brethren, and his disciples. We must not confuse this journey with that which he was to make later, when he fixed his dwelling there.[1] The distance from Cana to Capernaum is a day's journey; the road winds in and out among the hills, always descending, and it finally lies between two rocky masses whose scarped sides, like gigantic walls full of innumerable caverns, form the Wady-el-Hamam. These inaccessible caves, now inhabited by clouds of pigeons, served, in the time of Herod, as a refuge for brigands.[2] This savage gorge opens on the lake and the rich verdant plain of Gennesareth. The little caravan traversed the villages of Magdala, of Bethsaida, and, towards the evening, arrived at Capernaum. Jesus found himself in the country of his disciples; the families of John, of Andrew and Simon, and of Philip, lived at Bethsaida; but Simon, a married man, had a house at Capernaum, which seems to have been the birthplace of his mother-in-law. We have no details of this first sojourn of Jesus; its only aim was to strengthen the ties between the Master and his young disciples, and to prepare his future establishment; there was no rumour about him in the town on the occasion of his coming.

Jesus had another thought: he looked towards Jerusalem and the Temple; there, in the centre of the nation, in the chief city, before the people and the hierarchy, he was to show himself with power. A prophet, speaking of the Messianic times, had said: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire."[1] John the Forerunner had opened the way: Christ the Lord could appear. A suitable occasion offered itself, the Passover of the year 28 was at hand, and pilgrims were forming themselves into caravans in every part of Galilee. Jesus took the road to Jerusalem which follows the valley of the Jordan,[2] and set out with his disciples.

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[1] See Book III., chapter ii.

[2] *Antiq.* xii. 11. 1.

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[1] Malachi iii. 1.

[2] There were three principal roads leading from Galilee to Jerusalem. The first, or westernmost of these, joined the highway from Ptolemais to Gaza, crossed the plain of Sharon, and, leaving it at Lydda, turned up into the hill-country of Judah, thus avoiding Samaria entirely. The second, and most direct, passed straight along the plain of Jezreel, plunged into the Samaritan country, and reached the metropolis by way of Bethel, Ramah, and Gibeah, now Tel-el-Ful. The third followed the shore of the lake of Gennesareth, and, entering the valley of the Jordan, ran through Scythopolis and Archelais, past the spur of mount Sartabah and down to Phasaëlis and Jericho; then turned upwards across the desert and led through Bethany and Bethphage to the Mount of Olives. This was the route taken by the caravans which started from the western shore of the lake, and must have been that which Jesus followed upon leaving Capernaum.

CHAPTER V.

JESUS AT JERUSALEM AT THE PASSOVER OF THE YEAR 781. HIS FIRST APOSTLESHIP IN JUDAEA.

THE journey from Capernaum to Jerusalem requires five or six stages; but we know nothing of the incidents which marked it, of the different halts made by Jesus, his conversations, his thoughts, or his prayers. He did not travel unperceived as when, in former days, he joined the Galilaean caravans on their way to celebrate the Passover. His renown was spreading far and near; as men saw him, followed by his disciples, they said, "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth."[1] The attention of the crowd was attracted as he passed by. Of all kinds of curiosity, that which is concerned with religious sentiment is the most lively in the East; thus, even before his revelation was complete, Jesus, announced to the people by the voice of John, went on his way as though surrounded by an aureole.

Pilgrims resorted to Jerusalem for the Passover in such numbers that the greater part had to lodge outside the walls in the suburbs, in the adjoining hamlets and villas, and even in tents, which were erected in great numbers to receive guests both countrymen and foreigners. The Galilaeans established themselves on the Mount of Olives, towards Bethphage and Bethany, where it is supposed that they had a khan for themselves. Every morning they came to the Temple, passed

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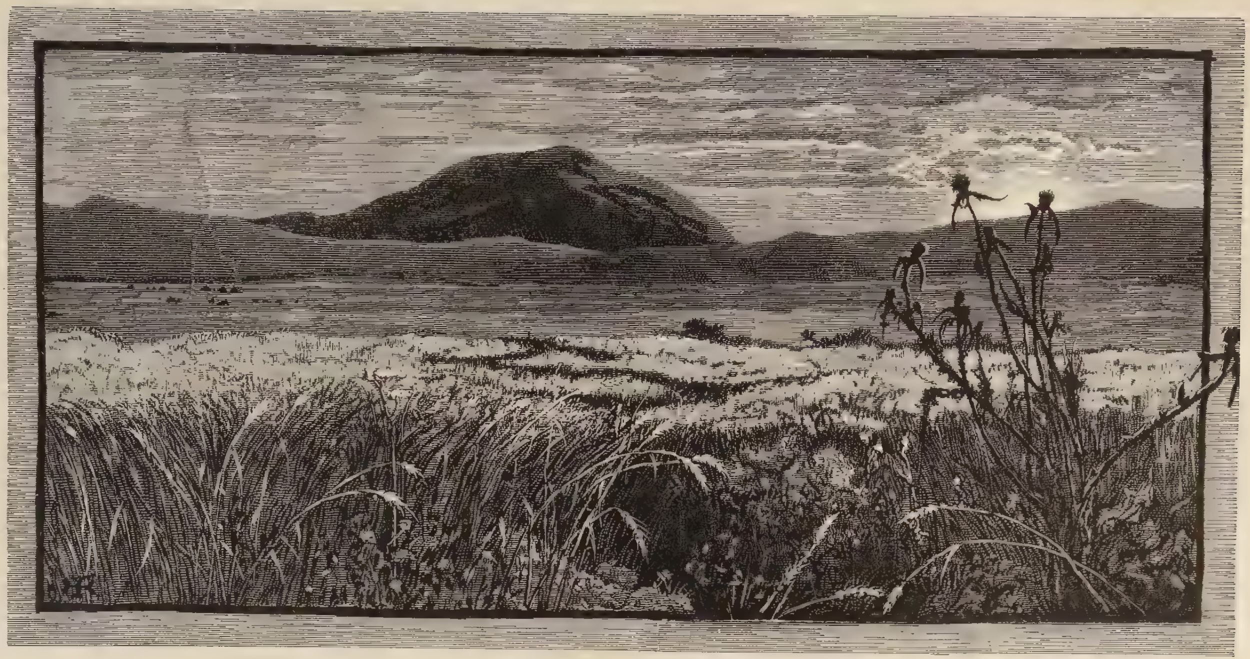
[1] Matt. xxi. 11.



MOUNT TABOR, FROM "THE WATERS OF MEGIDDO."

Formed by an important branch of the river Kishon, which traverses the "Plain of Megiddo."

the day in the town, and at evening returned to their caravanserai or to the neighbouring villages. It is probable that, according to his custom, as we shall see by the detailed accounts which the four evangelists have preserved about his last Passover, Jesus stayed with his friend Lazarus at Bethany, and from his house entered the town.

As the traveller arrives at the highest point of the road over the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem appears in view against the western sky, on the other side of the valley of the Kedron, covering five hills with its domes and terraces, its palaces and towers, the whole enclosed by a high wall. On the background Ophel and Sion, Acra and Bethzeta make an amphitheatre round Moriah, which is level at the top and crowned by the huge edifice of the Temple.[1]

The mass of sacred buildings made a regular square of five hundred paces on each side, surrounded by walls like ramparts Eight monumental gates, surmounted with fortified towers, gave access to them. In the north-west angle of the square, a mass square in form, of white marble, covered with plates of gold, stood out from the midst of the terraces and colonnades a hundred ells high. This was the Holy Place, dazzling as a flame and sometimes sparkling like snow. This huge mass of buildings, seen from afar, was superb ; it had the terrible aspect of a fortress combined with the sumptuous air of a palace. The whole soul, the religious and national genius of Israel, was there : nothing was holier to an Israelite than the walls and the soil chosen by God himself that he might dwell with his people ; the very sight of them transported him ; nor was he content to die until he had prayed and sacrificed there. Even at the present day, when nothing remains but ruins, the Israelites may be seen, after two thousand years, flocking thither from the four quarters of the globe, to touch and kiss the walls, to wail before them, to bathe them with their tears, and, by contact with them, kindle again the inextinguishable ardour of their hopes.

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[1] See Plan of the Temple.

In passing the threshold of one of these gates, the traveller entered into the Porch and vast Court of the Gentiles. Two porticoes extended along the walls which enclosed the Temple on the east and south: the first, towards the east, was called Solomon's Porch; the other, on the south, the Royal Porch. That of Solomon had three ranges of columns in white marble, twenty-five ells high, which rested on a pavement of many coloured stones, and upheld a roof of carved cedar. The porch was open to all, Gentiles as well as Jews, to the excommunicate and heretics as to the orthodox, to the impure as to the pure.

A richly-worked balustrade of stone and, behind at a distance of ten ells, a great wall, separated the Court of the Gentiles from that reserved for the Jews. The balustrade was pierced with thirteen gates, before which were placed thirteen pillars, with inscriptions, prohibiting further passage on pain of death, to all whom their religion or some legal impurity rendered unworthy to enter. The wall behind the balustrade was twenty-five ells high, and pierced by nine doors: four to the north, four to the south, and one to the east, called the Beautiful, or Corinthian, gate. Each had a flight of fourteen steps, which must be ascended to enter into the Porch of the Women. A simple portico with several ranks of columns stood around; between the columns, at regular distances, were placed thirteen boxes to receive the offerings of pious Israelites.[1]

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[1] These are called in the Talmud *Schouperot*, in Greek Γαζοφυλάκια. The expression in the Talmud is literally rendered "trumpets," and the reason of their being so called must evidently be that they were made in this form. Each of them bore an inscription stating its object. The first was set apart for the shekels of the year, the second for those of former years, the third for offerings of doves or pigeons, the fourth for the burnt offering, the fifth for wood for the sacrifice, the sixth for incense, the seventh for gold. The remaining six were reserved for voluntary sacrifices. Cf. Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmud.*, *in* 4 *Evang.*, Leipzig, 1684.

In front of the Porch of the Women, separated from it by a balustrade, was the Court of Israel, reserved for men, only fifteen feet in depth; a doorway of monumental bronze, called the Porch of Nicanor, crowned by a strong tower, gave entrance to it. The access to this was by a flight of fifteen steps, on which, on certain days, the priests chanted the famous Psalms of Degrees to an instrumental accompaniment.

Beyond the Court of Israel, and separated by another balustrade, was the Court of the Priests. The great altar of burnt offering stood in its midst; there was the brazen laver, and there the marble tables which were used for the immolation of the victims.

Behind the altar rose the Holy Place, the dwelling-place of Jehovah. Folding doors inlaid with gold, and surmounted by a colossal vine in gold, formed the entrance. The interior was composed of two large square cells, divided from each other by a broad Babylonian curtain, on which were woven cherubim with large wings: this was the veil of the Temple. The first cell was called the Holy Place; and contained, near the northern wall, the Table of Shewbread; on the south, the Golden Seven-branched Candlestick; in the midst, a little towards the east, was the altar of incense, on which, twice a day, morning and evening, incense was burnt in honour of Jehovah.

Behind the Veil was nothing. The Holy of Holies was empty. Since the disappearance of the Ark of the Covenant, the cell enclosed nothing but a stone called the Foundation (Schethiya), austere symbol of him who is the foundation of all.[1] The Jewish Temple recalls those of Egypt and the whole ancient world; the same idea inspired their architecture: they were essentially the dwelling-place of the divinity. In Christian churches man and God dwell together; but the ancient Temples were reserved for God: he alone was there. The sanctuary was his cell: inaccessible to all, save only the high priest, who might enter it at rare intervals. It was surrounded on all sides by vestibules and porches, or vast halls with pillars, in which the different classes of the nation met, approaching nearer, according to their rank, to the God who resided in the depths of this mysterious sanctuary.

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[1] Cf. *Bell. Jud.*, v. 5; *Antiq.*, ii. 8; i. 22.

The priestly class surrounded the Holy Place. The Egyptians, more than other people, had their colossal wall, built on a slope, like a stone veil at the entrance of the halls, opposing an insurmountable barrier to the profane.

The Jews had a still loftier barrier: death, the threat of which was engraved upon the columns, all round the porch; and the terrible majesty of Jehovah was thus declared. The high priest entered alone, once a year, into the sanctuary; the priests and the Levites might only touch the walls; the holy people themselves could only look at it from a distance; and the profane, the Gentiles, from the foot of the Corinthian gate, could only with difficulty, through clouds of incense, see the smoke and fire on the altar of burnt offering.

There, in the Court of the Gentiles, and the Court of Israel, occurred a great number of the scenes in the public life of Jesus; there he was now to appear, to attract the attention of the people, to disturb the Sanhedrin and the religious authority by a beginning of his career full of energy and strength.

On his arrival at Jerusalem he went direct to the Temple;[1] and must have entered by the gate of Susa, which opened upon the valley of Kedron, and was the first in the way of pilgrims coming from the Mount of Olives; it gave admission into Solomon's Porch and the Court of the Gentiles, which was called the First Temple.

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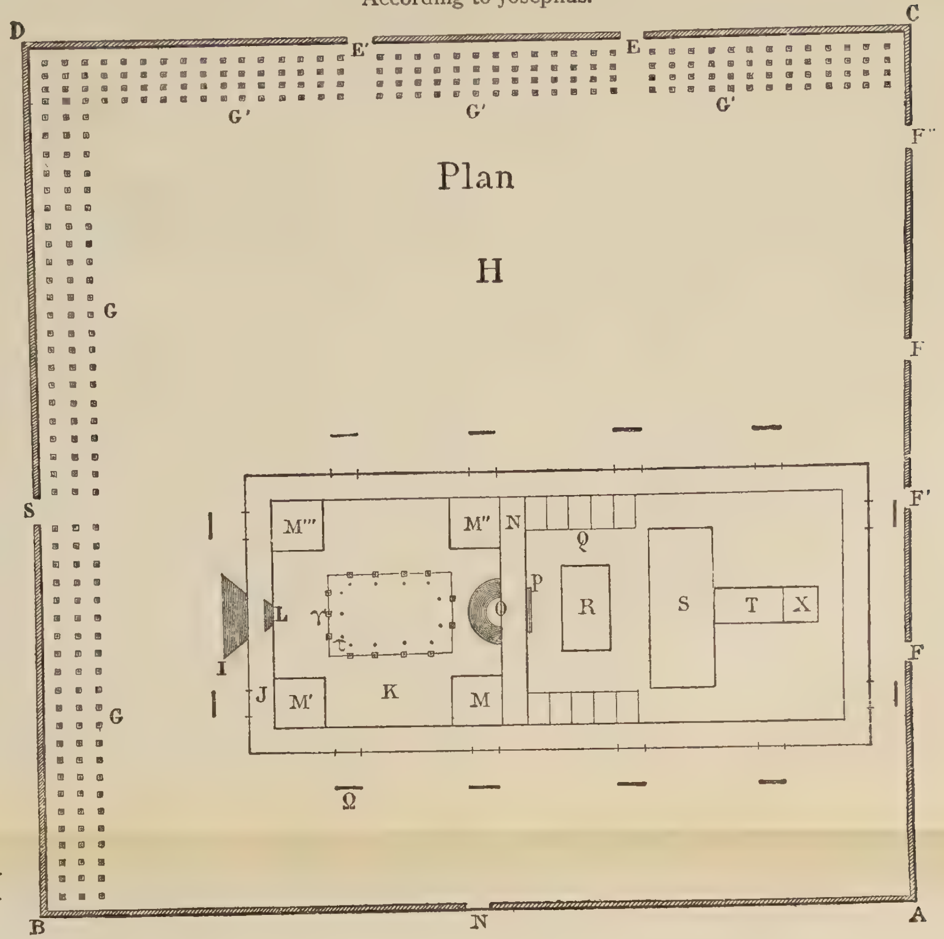
[1] John ii. 14, etc.

Plan of the Temple of Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus

According to Josephus.

A B=500 *Cubits*
B D= „ „
C D= „ „
A C= „ „
N *Northern Gate (not used)*
S *Gate of Susa*
EE′ *Southern Gates*
FF′F″F‴ *Western Gates*
GG *Solomon's Porch*
G′G′G′ *Eastern Porch*
H *Court of the Gentiles*
I *Flight of fourteen steps leading to the Chel and Beautiful Gate*
J *The Chel*
K *Court of the Women*
L *Flight of twelve steps*
MM′M″M‴ *Lishkah*
N *Court of the Israelites*
O *Nicanor's Gate*
P *Three steps and a platform + one step*
Q *Court of the Priests*
R *Altar of burnt offering*
S *Vestibule*
T *The Holy Place*
X *The Holy of Holies*
Y *Porch of Court of the Israelites*
Alms boxes
Ω *Pillars with inscriptions forbidding Gentiles to venture further*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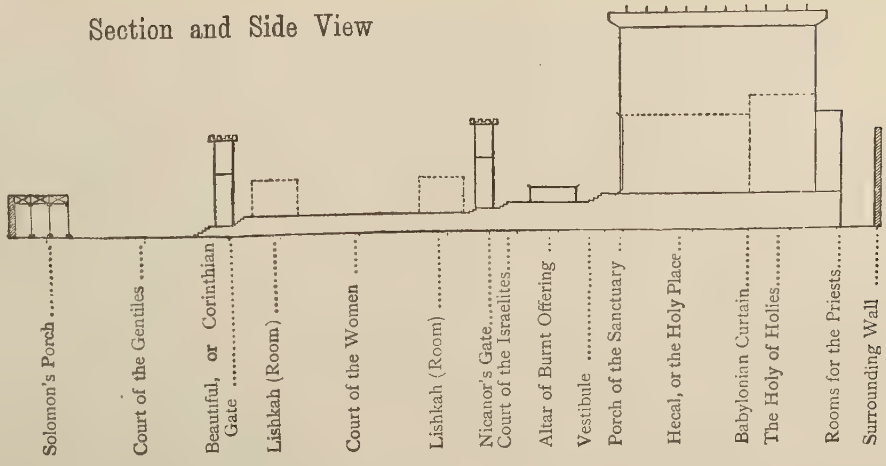
Section and Side View


Solomon's Porch
Court of the Gentiles
Beautiful, or Corinthian Gate
Lishkah (Room)
Court of the Women
Lishkah (Room)
Nicanor's Gate
Court of the Israelites
Altar of Burnt Offering
Vestibule
Porch of the Sanctuary
Hecal, or the Holy Place
Babylonian Curtain
The Holy of Holies
Rooms for the Priests
Surrounding Wall

At the approach of the great feasts, and of the Passover above all, the crowd pressed under these vast galleries: there was a noisy and tumultuous coming and going. The money-changers had their tables there, and, since all which was needed for the ablutions and sacrifices could only be bought with sacred money, here was the exchange for Gentile money, and, in violation of the law, this exchange was made a matter of profit. The dealers occupied a part of the court, and thither were brought, into pens as of a slaughter-house, whole flocks of oxen, bulls and goats, sheep and lambs. The sellers of doves had their stalls by the side of those shops where salt, oil, incense, and everything necessary for the altar service, was sold. The cries of the animals mixed with the noise of the crowd, the voice of the dealers with the eager disputes of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Usury, venality, and the sharp desire for gain, corrupted the most holy things, engendered revolting and scandalous abuses, and often found accomplices amongst those very people who ought to have been incorruptible judges, inexorable censors. The masters, the rabbis, had many fine sayings on the respect due to the Temple: "Let no one enter there," they said, "with his beast, his shoes, or his purse, and without shaking the dust from his feet. Let none make the Temple a pathway, nor a place for spitting."[1] Meanwhile, the exchange of money, the choice and purchase of animals destined for sacrifice, which ought to have been made outside the gates, took place in the sacred enclosure, in the very place of prayer. It became no longer a temple, but a market and a bazaar.

This sight must have often angered Jesus, and he had suffered in silence; but to-day the time for action had come. He gave free course to his zeal and sacred anger, and, gathering together the cords which served to tie the animals, he made a scourge and set himself to cast out of the Temple all the traders with their sheep and oxen; then he overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and said to those who sold doves in the name of the family of the high priests: "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."[1]

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[1] *Talmud Babyl.*, Jevamoth, fol. vi. 2.

His power was irresistible, and all obeyed it; in seeing him his disciples recalled the expression of a popular psalm, which said of the Messiah: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."[2] There was, indeed, something divine in this act of holy vigour. One man, alone, scarcely known, with a scourge in his hand, without official authority, who thus cast out the merchants with their animals, while none resisted him, either the crowd or the servants of the Temple, or their soldiers, such an one showed a grandeur and an energy worthy of God; he did not do this simply in the name of order, but as a prophet, as a reformer, as Messiah; he did not act simply as a messenger of God, but as a master; he treated the dwelling-place of Jehovah as his own: it was the habitation of his Father, from which he had a right to drive all that troubled and dishonoured it.

The conscience of mankind has applauded and still applauds the religious wrath of Jesus. It is probable that the crowd saw with sympathy the new prophet assail those who trafficked in holy things, under the shadow of the Temple, and to its detriment. The justice and courage of a man who revolts against abuses is always pleasing to the soul of the people.

As soon as the first moment was over, Jesus was pointed out to those who were the guardians of the Temple. They came to him and said: By what right dost thou forbid that which the priests allow? What sign dost thou show to make thy violence legitimate?[3] Jesus answered by one of those mysterious sayings which those who spoke with him did not always understand, but which revealed his prophetic intuition and which the future could alone verify. "Destroy this Temple," he said, pointing with his hand to his own breast, "and in three days I will raise it up." St. John, the eye-witness of the scene, must have remarked the gesture of Jesus, and in his account he is careful to add that the Master spoke of his body, the true temple where the Godhead dwelt in person, which the Jews, in fact, were to destroy, and which he himself was to raise from the dead. The Jews, misunderstanding the answer of Jesus, cried: "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?"[1]

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[1] John ii. 16.

[2] Psalm lxix. 9.

[3] John ii. 18, etc.

The abuses against which Jesus protested as Messiah and the Son of God, were continued under the connivance of the authorities, who, instead of forbidding them, made them profitable. Two years later, on the eve of his betrayal, again acting as a master, and in the house of his Father, he was again to expel the same traders with their sheep and oxen, again to overturn the tables of the money-changers with their purses and piles of coin. But if this act of indignant zeal did not succeed as a material reform, it obtained a still higher result and the effect he desired. Christ had declared, in the face of the multitude and the Jewish authorities, that he was the Master of the Temple and the Son of God. The scene must have been much talked of, and public attention eagerly directed towards the new prophet. He pleased the people, but shocked and wounded the chiefs, priests, and elders, with those who were faithful to them, the indifferent and satisfied classes, all who were rendered careless by authority and wealth, the partizans of custom and peace at any price, all who held in any degree to existing power. Societies and men are always the same.

This scene in the public life of Jesus marks the date of the first opposition that he excited. The conflict was henceforward open between himself and national and religious authority; it was inevitable and would be pushed to its natural results. The expulsion of the traders left such an impression that the mysterious words of Jesus, spoken on this occasion, brought about his condemnation; his enemies misrepresented it, and endeavoured to make it an accusation of a mortal crime; he was to be accused of having desired to destroy the Temple, and of giving himself out as able to rebuild it in three days.

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[1] See Appendix A for the chronological value of this saying.

However, the presence of Jesus at Jerusalem was not otherwise disturbed. He was present at the Passover, on the very day of the ceremony; he worked many miracles, but the historian of that time of his life does not give us the details. They were, as we shall see later, cures of every kind, for Jesus loved to reveal his mission by his benefits. The multitude thronged around him, and a great number who witnessed his miracles regarded him as the Messiah; but he hid himself from them,[1] according to the express remark of the evangelist.

It often happens that a man is carried away by an opinion which he has himself created, and which is loud in his praise. Public favour leads him further than he wishes, and, instead of mastering it, he submits to and follows it; while he declares himself to be the ruler of the crowd, he is only its slave; while he believes it subdued, it is only dazzled; convinced, it is but curious; devoted to his person and cause, it obeys only its own interests and its selfishness. As soon as he asks it for any sacrifice, it withdraws and betrays him, and in its revolt and anger breaks to pieces him who thought himself its idol.

Jesus never obeyed it for an instant; he knew what was in man, and had no need that anyone should teach him.[2]

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[1] John ii. 24.

[2] John ii. 25.

From the first time he met it he judged the multitude, knew it to be inconstant and vain, greedy of novelty and comfort, easy to intimidate and lead astray, always ready to be moved by wonders or by flattery, prone to sudden resentment against those who would teach it the lessons of truth and the restraints of justice. He foresaw that it would be the plaything of masters, to whom it was in servitude. This was no ground fit for the divine seed; Jerusalem, in spite of the love he bore her, inspired him with distrust.

The influence of Jesus on this first journey was not limited to the popular class; it made its way among the rich, the doctors and priests; his name, his conduct, and his words were to be the object of lively discussion.

Those who awake the enthusiasm of the multitude rarely leave its masters indifferent. God has his elect everywhere; but those in the official world, whom truth enlightens, rarely have the same frankness, or the same vigour as simple souls among the people. Their position hampers them, they have a thousand interests to consider, and they only answer with caution to the appeal of their conscience. Among these was a certain Nicodemus, an influential Pharisee, he seems to have belonged to the great council;[1] according to the Talmud[2] his true name was Bonai; he was a priest, and also an official charged with the administration of the canals and wells, in order to provide for the needs of strangers who flocked into the town on the great feast-days; he was still living during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, and he belonged to one of the three wealthiest Jewish families in the city. When persecution afterwards raged against the disciples of Jesus his goods were confiscated, and his family reduced to poverty.

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[1] John vii. 50.

[2] *Taanith*, fol. 20, 1; *Sanhedrim*, fol. 43, 1. Cf. Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmud., in Evangel. Joan.*

Nicodemus had been struck by the teaching and, above all, by the miracles of Jesus. In the sincerity of his new faith, he wished for explanation and instruction from the lips of the Master himself; he asked for a secret conversation,[1] and came to him by night, in order, no doubt, not to awaken any suspicion, since to come to Jesus, at that moment, was compromising. In spite of his reserve, such an action denotes an upright heart; to seek the light, even timidly, is always worthy of praise and respect.

What astonished the Pharisees and all the learned men who acted in good faith, from the first manifestation of Jesus, was a return and awakening of the prophetic spirit. Jesus did not give the impression of a scribe, a doctor, or a Haggadist, but of a prophet; his word did not, like that of all the masters who, for four centuries, had taught the people, rest on the letter of the Law and on human tradition, but was a direct inspiration. No name, in the mouth of a Pharisee, was greater or more flattering than that of Prophet.

By this title then Nicodemus addressed him: "We know that thou art a teacher sent from God; for no man can do the miracles which thou doest, if God be not with him."

Jesus, who read to the very bottom of this uncertain soul, went straight to the question which preoccupied and agitated all religious spirits at the time of Nicodemus, and said, "Verily verily, I say unto you, Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To be born again, that deep saying in which was contained the whole doctrine of Jesus on the spiritual Kingdom and the function of Messiah, disconcerted Nicodemus and wounded all his prejudices. He was one who believed it possible to speak of new birth to a Gentile or a sinner; but a true son of Abraham, an Israelite of pure race, a zealous Pharisee, had no need of transformation. Surely he was worthy by his race, and his faithfulness, of the Kingdom of heaven. Affecting therefore to give to the word of Jesus an entirely material sense, he answered, not without some artifice and a touch of irony which ill concealed his embarrassment: "How can a man be born again when he is old? can he enter again into his mother's womb, and be born?"

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[1] John iii. 1, etc.

Jesus renewed his declaration, and explained it: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." The baptism of water, as John gave it, prepared for regeneration, but the outpouring of the Spirit promised in the times of the Messiah alone could accomplish it. To overthrow at one blow all the race prejudices of Nicodemus, Jesus included in the same inferiority, the same worthlessness, and the same want of power, all that is not God and his Kingdom: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," whatever be its name, its privilege and its race; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Between the flesh and the Spirit there is a great gulf. Spirit may be poured out on flesh; flesh cannot of itself be lifted towards the Spirit; whoever will enter into the Kingdom of the Spirit must be born of the Spirit. Jesus said again: "Marvel not that I said unto you that you must be born again." The Spirit is mysterious and free as the wind; "it bloweth where it listeth; thou hearest its voice and thou knowest not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. So is every man who is born of the Spirit." He is as inscrutable as God from whom he comes, as God to whom he returns.

Nicodemus, astonished and perplexed, endeavoured to comprehend the mystery to which the learning of the Pharisees gave him no clue. He said, "How can these things be?" Then said Jesus unto him, "Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?"

The prophets indeed had everywhere announced the outpouring of the Spirit for the Messianic time, an outpouring which should make of Israel a holy people, and create in it that new life of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus: the very soul of their doctrine and their hope. But one condition was laid upon them: faithful obedience to the word of God's messengers. Jesus demanded this teachableness from Nicodemus; he who believes understands; he who shelters himself behind his human and literal knowledge, remains in darkness.

Then, at once joining himself to the prophets whose authority Nicodemus could not misunderstand, Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things," that is to say, the conditions necessary for every man to enter into the Kingdom, "and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things," and the mysteries of the Kingdom of God?

Nicodemus was silenced; and Jesus felt that the reproach had taught him to be trustful; he then opened to him that divine world which none can know except the Son of Man, for no one has ascended up into heaven, and known the will of God, save he who came down from heaven, the Son of Man. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,[1] even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Thus Jesus allowed the great destiny of the Messiah to become visible in the same ray of light where the glory and the death of the Son of Man were mingled together, and where the death was hidden by the glory. The whole mystery of this destiny has its unfathomable source in the love of God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Now is the hour of salvation, the crisis, and it must run its course. A question arises in view of this separation of mankind round the Son of Man. Some believe and come, others believe not and are rejected. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." That which comes from God returns to God.

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[1] Numbers xxi. 9.

This conversation of Jesus and the Pharisee Nicodemus is the first written revelation of the Master's teaching; it has been preserved for us by the fourth Gospel, in a few sentences which sum it up and allow us to see its main lines and its depth.

We see what the Kingdom of God is: the participation of man in the very life of God; we see how we enter into it: by a second birth which makes of man a new being, no longer carnal but spiritual; we learn the condition of this birth: the baptism of water and of the Spirit; and we know henceforth that to understand the mystery we must have faith in the word of God's messengers, and of him who is above them all, the Son of God. Jesus' words faintly foreshadowed this truth, which after-events were to make perfectly clear: he was the great sign raised in the midst of the ages and the nations; a sad yet wonderful sign, as was the cross by which he triumphed and on which he was to die.

What he said in the ear of a few Jews in that memorable night in April, within the walls of a little chamber, has enlightened the whole world. The Spirit always bloweth where it listeth; souls touched by him are born again, and that which was flesh becomes Spirit; that is the grand fact of the life of consciences. The Son of Man, then unknown, has been thenceforth lifted into the open sky which enlightens mankind; all eyes see him and shall see him. Those who see him with faith are members incorporate with him in eternal life; the rest yet abide in flesh and blood, sunk in darkness and mortality. Every saying of Jesus is a lasting light, his words do not pass away; the truths which he has spoken remain as immovable as the firmament, time explains them instead of effacing them, they lead us into a new world. No master, before him or after him, has so spoken; neither the Greek nor Roman moralists, nor the rabbis of Judaea, no philosopher, no reformer. His words are no mere abstractions or rigid precepts, but life-giving words which interpret the deepest facts of conscience, and which conscience alone can verify; if it has the courage to make trial of God with faith and sacrifice.

The evangelist does not tell us the effect on Nicodemus; we may suppose that such revelations from such lips enlightened the soul of the Pharisee: he became a disciple of the Master, in secret, but always ready to defend him. We shall hear him later, in a tumultuous scene of the Sanhedrin, when his colleagues, the doctors, were resolved on the arrest of Jesus, raise his voice for justice and exclaim, "Doth our law permit that any man should be condemned before he is heard?"[1] And when Jewish hatred had succeeded in doing away with Christ, he was to follow his Master faithfully even to death; he was to join himself to Joseph of Arimathea and the other disciples, to render to the Crucified the rites of sepulture, and he was to come to embalm the body, bringing a rich provision of spices, a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pounds in weight.[2]

Jesus did not prolong his sojourn at Jerusalem. When the feast was over, he left the town with his disciples and dwelt in the country of Judaea.[3] This vague expression does not allow us to determine the exact spot. He went in different directions through the country, which thus received, earlier than Samaria and Galilee, the first-fruits of his ministry. No memory has remained of his journey; we find no trace of him at Bethlehem, nor at Karim, nor at Hebron, nor at Engedi, nor on the confines of Idumaea. St. John records only that all Judaea was filled with his voice, and that, from all the villages and towns, the crowd followed to hear him.

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[1] John vii. 51.
[2] John xix. 39.
[3] John iii. 22.

By preaching first in Judaea he was obedient to his mission, for Judaea was the necessary centre of all prophetic and Messianic action. A messenger of God must necessarily work in this soil sacred above all others, in which was the Temple, where was the most illustrious tribe, and where the national and religious life was preserved in its most ardent and purest form. Providence had caused that Jesus should be born there, the land of Judah was therefore his true country; in the desert of Judah John had announced his advent; and there Jesus was to show himself to his people.

This sojourn in Judaea lasted for several months; Jesus left it to return to Galilee by Samaria, four months before the harvest, that is to say, in December of the year 781 from the foundation of Rome.[1] One phrase in the fourth Gospel gives us a short but valuable note on this period of his preaching in Judaea. "Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,[2] he made proselytes, and all came to him."[3] It appears evident that Jesus wished to consecrate the first times of his public life, by himself preparing the people to receive his word and to submit to his action. He did not begin over again, but rather completed and confirmed what John the Baptist had attempted with so much trouble. The whole of his preaching seems to have been summed up in two lines, which the Gospel of St. Mark has preserved for us.[4] He no longer said, as John had done: "The time is at hand"; but "The time is fulfilled." If, as did his forerunner, he proclaimed the necessary law of transformation and penitence, he also added, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and he demanded faith in the Gospel for the news which he bore and realised; he allowed his disciples to baptize like John, and made this a prelude to the institution of Christian baptism, which was to be the effective sign of the spiritual regeneration of man. The attraction of his word and his person was powerful; all the country of Judaea was once more moved, and the crowd flocked towards him, attracted by the renown of his virtue and his miracles.

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[1] John iv. 35.
[2] John iii. 22, 26.
[3] John iv. 2.
[4] Mark i. 15.

One of the dominant ideas which at that moment excited the crowd and its teachers, the numerous disciples of John and those of Jesus, was the purification necessary to be worthy of the Kingdom. A controversy between one or more Jews and the disciples of the Baptist, on this very matter of purification, was a sign of the state of public opinion.[1] We do not know the ground of the dispute, whether it were the relative value of the ablutions prescribed by the Law, of the rite instituted by John, and of baptism as practised by the disciples of Jesus; nor does anything in the narrative of the fourth Gospel enable us to clear up the difficulty. The striking fact brought to light by the historian, and the only one of any importance, is the annoyance of the followers of the Baptist at the increasing success of Jesus.

After the discussion they came to their master, who was still baptising the multitude, not long before the end of his career. He was then at Enon, a little place renowned for the abundance of its springs, and of which the name and the traces are lost. St. Jerome, following Eusebius, places it near Salem, in the valley of the Jordan, on the right bank, eight miles south of Scythopolis. Perhaps, therefore, it belonged to the territory and province of Judaea. "Master," said his disciples to John, "he who was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou gavest witness, baptizes, and all men seek him."

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[1] John iii. 25, etc.

Anger and jealous humour breathed through these words. The success of Jesus affected those who had joined the Baptist; it seemed to them that the glory of their master was declining, that he would be eclipsed by a new-comer, and they could not resign themselves to a defeat in which they found themselves involved.

Self-denial is a rare virtue, and one of the most difficult; it is practised sometimes by an individual, but never by parties and schools. Chiefs of parties do themselves honour by self-abnegation, but they never succeed in inspiring their disciples with it. The great soul of John had experienced this. In spite of his ascendency, his heroic forgetfulness of himself before Christ, his repeated efforts to gain souls for him, he did not succeed in giving over to Jesus all who called him master, and the disciples of John were, under the name of Mendaites, to become a sect who would last through many ages.

The complaint of his disciples called forth from John a new testimony concerning the Messiah. Personal renunciation has rarely been couched in more sincere and dignified language, nor in words more humble and delicate; and, certainly, has never inspired a nobler eulogy of the person by whom it was to be carried out. "Why all this trouble and these empty discussions?" said the Baptist. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven."[1] If I am a voice crying in the desert, God hath given me that voice. I am but what he has made me. "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." He knew that his destiny was accomplished, and, resigning himself with a firm and quiet mind, said: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

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[1] John iii. 27.

The thought of the Messiah in whom he saw himself absorbed, took entire possession of him from his first interview with Jesus at the Jordan. Our common human speech is not enough to describe it as he saw it, and he invented a new language.

"It is he that cometh from above," he said, recalling the words of his father Zacharias, in announcing the Christ: "He is the dayspring from on high.[1] He is above all," for all others come of the earth; and "whoever is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth." Nature is determined by origin, and nature again determines our words and actions. But "he cometh from above; what he speaketh, that he hath seen and heard" in heaven, where truth is as light, changeless, boundless. He beareth witness of that which he hath seen and heard; but, he added, looking towards his disciples, "his witness is not received;" and yet, to receive his witness "is to set to our seal that God is true."

His words are the words of God; he cannot err. God has given him the Spirit without measure. The vision of his Baptism passes before him. "The Father," he said, "loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

These words, the last by which he called on his disciples to attach themselves to Jesus, were the testament of this great prophet. The wrath of God came back to the lips of John as at the beginning of his ministry; then it was the anger of justice with which he menaced those who were obstinate in their impenitence ; now, he terrified the blind who resisted the appeal of the Messiah, by the anger of love unrecognized. Henceforward, he was to be silent. He had nothing more to say about his Master, but we shall see him hereafter make a last effort, from the depths of his prison, to induce the Master to speak and convince his obstinate disciples.

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[1] Luke i. 78.

The news of the success of Jesus in the country of Judaea came to the ears of the Pharisees, who were moved by it. The jealous rivalry of the disciples of John was to reinforce the rising opposition already disclosed in the city. Jesus was warned of it ; his disciples, many of whom had been the disciples of John, and who formed a constant bond between himself and John, told him the incidents as they occurred ; and he would not give too strong an impulse to the hostility of his enemies. His work had hardly begun. It would be wise to retire from the strife, for absence closes many conflicts. Jesus quitted Judaea, and, attended by his disciples, he directed his journey towards Galilee, taking the road by Samaria.

CHAPTER VI.

JESUS AMONG THE SAMARITANS.

SAMARIA owes its name to its chief city, which in its turn was so called from the hill Chamoron, on which Omri, King of Israel, built it nine centuries before Jesus; the hill itself was named after Chamor, one of the sons of Canaan.[1] We find thus an example of the perpetuity of names and traditions in that unchanging East, where man, after having hoped so long, can now only remember.

Samaria, after the deposition and banishment of Archelaus, was part of the province of Judaea, and was directly governed by the Roman procurators. It is a delightful country, of valleys and mountains, between Judaea and Galilee; it extended from the plain of Sharon to that of the Jordan, is bounded on the north by the plain of Jezreel, and on the south by the Wady Lubban. Josephus[2] speaks of its fertility, its fruits and pastures, the milk of its flocks, and the abundance of its water-springs. Even at the present day, in spite of the desolation of the whole of Palestine, Samaria is less sombre than Judaea, austere and hard as is its rocky soil. The outline of the mountains is soft, the hills are rounded, the valleys broad with murmuring streams; the olive tree, whose worn aspect adds to the sadness of Judaea, is quite another thing in Samaria; the trunks and boughs are higher, and the foliage brighter and more silvery.

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[1] Gen. x. 18.

[2] *Antiq.* viii. 12, 5.

The Samaritans had been hated for centuries by the men of Galilee and Judaea; and time, instead of softening it, had only deepened their hatred. Their enmity dates from the division of the Ten Tribes, which broke the unity of the kingdom of David; and afterwards came the exile and the fall of the kingdom of Israel. Samaria, desolated by exile, was invaded by colonies of foreigners coming from the provinces of Babel, Cuthra, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, sent by order of Shalmaneser to repeople the country. The blood of Ephraim was mixed with that of these Gentiles, and, although the religion of Moses remained supreme among the Samaritans, the Israelites, refusing to recognise them as brethren, added contempt to their old hatred, and called them Cuthites, from the name of one of the Gentile tribes with which they had mingled their blood.[1] When the Judaean colonists, led by Zerubbabel, arrived from Babylon, and were about to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple, under the direction of Ezra and Nehemiah, they indignantly rejected all help from the Samaritans. This was a cruel insult, remembered in Samaria two centuries later. Manasses, the brother of the high priest Jaddua, availed himself of this enmity and built with Alexander's permission, on Mount Gerizim, a temple to rival that of Jerusalem.[2] This sacrilegious outrage redoubled the animosity of true Jews against heretics and schismatics; the temple of Gerizim was destroyed by the Asmonaean, John Hyrcanus, a hundred and twenty-nine years before Jesus Christ. The ruins were still extant, and the mountain, stripped of its sanctuary, was still a place of prayer for the conquered. The few survivors of the Jewish sect called it holy and blessed; and as the Jews turned towards Zion at the hour of prayer, so the Samaritans looked towards Gerizim.

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[1] Acts ix. 14.

[2] *Antiq.* xi. 8, 2.

In the first century, in the time of Jesus, the relations between the Jews and the Samaritans had lost nothing of their rancorous hostility. In this obstinate race all feelings endure and grow stronger. There was some danger in passing through Samaria on the way to Jerusalem; many Galilaeans went out of their road to avoid it, and passed either through the valley of Jordan or across the plain of Sharon. The Samaritans avenged themselves for contempt by violence, and denied all hospitality.

Their outcast state, for many centuries, had kept them absolutely strangers to the whole religious development of Israel. The Pentateuch and perhaps the older prophets were enough for them; but they knew nothing of the teaching of the Pharisees. The only point of contact with the Jews at that time, was that, like them, they expected the Messiah, the great prophet announced by Moses.[1] This hope was exclusively religious: no political ambition, no earthly dream, stained its purity. Their great prophet was not, as in the case of the Jews, one who should have universal dominion, but a messenger like unto Moses, a legislative reformer, whose office would be entirely moral and spiritual.

They not only rejected the tradition and the observances of the doctors, but ignored them. No words can express the disdain which the masters and rigid orthodox had for this small population so abominable in their eyes; they avoided their very name; the greatest insult in their mouth was not the epithet of Gentile or Publican, but that of Samaritan; and Jesus was not exempt from this reproach.[2]

Far from sharing in the sentiments and prejudices of his countrymen, Jesus loved the excommunicated folk of Samaria;[3] and when, on quitting Judaea, he chose to traverse their territory, it was because he knew that he should there find, closed against his enemies, ground prepared to receive his word ; nor was his expectation deceived.

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[1] Deut. xviii. 18.
[2] John viii. 48.
[3] Luke x., xvii.

All that ancient land of Canaan is full of memories, and the most sacred were grouped round the ancient city of Sichem. It took its name from the chief of a tribe of Heveens, was situated between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, where two roads crossed, one of which was the communication between the Great Sea or Mediterranean, and the Jordan and the country beyond it ; the other was the road between Mesopotamia and the Chaldaean plains, and Egypt and the West. Near at hand was the oak forest of Moreh, where Abraham had pitched his tent, and where God had promised to give the land to his race. In memory of his vision, the father of the faithful had set up, in that place, a stone to Jehovah.[1]

Jacob, on his return from Mesopotamia, where he had served his uncle Laban for twice seven years, had pitched his tent there ; and he also had raised a sacrificial stone to the Almighty God of Israel. The patriarch bought a field near Moreh, and dug there a deep well, for the needs of his family and his flocks.[2] There Joseph, dying in Egypt, prayed that he might be buried. Moses, flying from the land of the Pharaohs, remembered the last wishes of the patriarch ; and brought his bones to the boundaries of Canaan,[3] that Joshua might afterwards bury them in the field bought by Jacob from the sons of Hamor.[4] There again, on the slopes of Ebal and Gerizim, Joshua set the twelve tribes in order, and caused the proclamation of the blessings and curses recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy.[5]

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[1] Genesis xii. 7.

[2] Genesis xxiii. 18.

[3] Exodus xiii. 19.

[4] Joshua xxiv. 32.

[5] Deut. xxvii.-xxx.

Sichem, as it grew great, became the capital of the kingdom of Israel, but its glory soon faded. In the time of Jesus the province of Samaria had for its chief city a new town, built by Herod to the west of the old capital, on the hill above the plain of Sharon, and named by him Sebaste after the Emperor Augustus. But Sichem remained venerable by its memories; its fortunate situation near the two routes which made the principal lines of communication between east and west, north and south, gave it a great commercial importance; the Jews in scorn called it Sychar.[1]

When Jesus, following the very road by which Abraham and Jacob had passed, returned from Judaea into Galilee, "Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.[2] Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well." It was in the winter, in the middle of December, at the hour of midday, the sixth hour of the day among the Orientals. The disciples were gone into the city to buy food, leaving him alone. He seemed to await someone's coming. "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." But she, knowing from his language that a Jew was addressing her, refused. "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it

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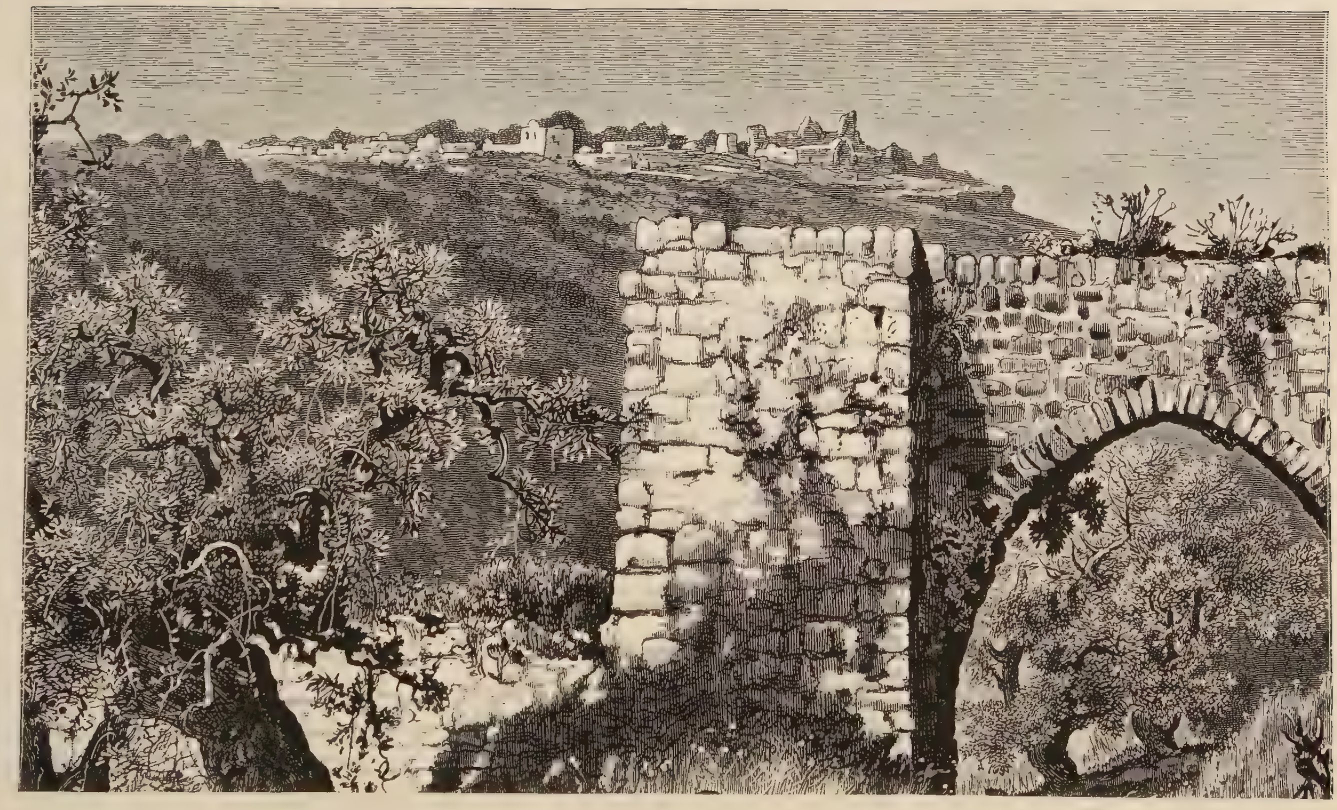
[1] The name of Sichar or Sycar appears to have been an injurious nickname given by the Jews at some time to the town of Sichem. It may be derived from the Hebrew, *Seqer*, a lie, or *Sicor*, a drunkard. In the first case, the Jews would have alluded to the worship of the Samaritans, in which was a mixture of Paganism. In the second case, they would have spoken of a vice which it seems was common to all the inhabitants of Mount Ephraim. Many passages in history speak of the drunkards of Ephraim. (Isaiah xxviii. 1, 3.)

[2] John iv. 1, etc.



THE HILL OF SAMARIA.

The road by which it is approached from the south passes through an olive-grove and under a ruined aqueduct.

is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" Jesus following out his own thoughts and wishing to elevate the woman's, answered her, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman," her curiosity aroused rather than satisfied, "saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." Jesus could see plainly that the Samaritan woman did not perceive his meaning; in order to open her eyes to the truth, he would pierce her conscience: that is where the stroke must be dealt if a soul is to be opened to receive God. "Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither." The word struck home; unwilling either to yield or to tell an untruth, she took refuge in ambiguity: "I have no husband," she said. "Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman," feeling that she was found out, "saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Then her thoughts rose higher: "Our fathers," she added, pointing to Gerizim, "worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him," giving utterance to what had become the popular belief, "I know that Messias cometh." And ready, in the simplicity of her faith, to listen at once to his teaching, she added, "When he is come, he will tell us all things." Jesus, seeing her mind opened, revealed himself, and said unto her, "I that speak unto thee am he."

This meeting with the woman at Jacob's Well, this demand of water to drink, this conversation, these ordinary incidents of life, gave occasion to Jesus for a manifestation of himself, which was touching and sublime in its confidential character. He was the Christ who had come, who was expected by the Samaritans, by the Jews, and by all mankind ; he proclaimed this to a sinful woman, whom his presence transformed, to whom his word revealed eternal life ; he called himself the Gift of God ; to whomsoever asketh of him, he communicates the Spirit which he called living water, borrowing this symbol from the water which he asked of the Samaritan. This Spirit, whereof none can know whence he comes and whither he goes, is known only by his effects, for he becomes in the soul of the believer a springing well, which alone quenches the thirst of infinite desire. As earthly springs rise to the level of their fount, so the living water of the Spirit leaves the depths of God, springs up in the conscience, and loses itself again in God. To give this living water was the function of Messiah ; he is the true Jacob's Well, dug by God himself, at the intersection of the roads by which passes the stream of mankind ; he thus founded an eternal Religion, the worship in spirit and in truth. Henceforward, Jerusalem was no more and Gerizim no more : he is the only Temple, and this Temple is in every soul wherein the Spirit dwells, who adores God in the Spirit of love and truth : that is his Church and his Kingdom.

While Jesus was thus preaching the Gospel to the woman of Samaria, his disciples returned from the town. They wondered to see their Master thus conversing, for Jewish customs treated women with a certain disdain, they were never greeted, nor did a man talk in public even with his own wife. The rabbis, exaggerating these stern manners, would not even teach a woman: "Throw the words of the Law into the fire," they said with bitter pride, "rather than communicate them to women." The disciples of Jesus must have been infected by these prejudices: hence their surprise. But such was their religious respect to their Master that no one dared to show any surprise or make any observation; they did not even dare to ask what he was saying to this woman of Samaria.

Jesus obeyed a higher law, to the great scandal of the Pharisees; he never cared for human traditions nor hesitated to trample them under foot, whenever he found them in the way of his work. He took on himself all his words and deeds, and in the simplest circumstances of life he not only escaped from his time and his surroundings, but he was their complete master. He was never the mere Jew, with his narrow peculiarities; he was the Son of Man who showed himself in eternal beauty and truth; his acts demanded new customs, his words gave more than human clearness to the mind, leading it to know the impenetrable secrets of God.

This conversation at Jacob's Well with a fallen woman, remains one of the most touching evidences of the goodness and mercy of Christ; he was already showing himself as the Good Shepherd, finding the lost sheep. All that is weak and wandering is meant to be of his fold; helplessness is one of the qualifications for it. Womanhood gains elevation and honour from this Samaritan, from whom the Master did not disdain to ask drink, and with whom he spoke of that mysterious water which slakes the thirst of those who, like this woman, feel, in their sorrow, a more ardent desire of eternal consolation.

Upon the arrival of the disciples, the Samaritan woman retired, leaving her pitcher filled for the service of the wayfarers, and, deeply stirred by what she had heard, went her way into the city. She burned to tell to others, to tell to all, the cause of her agitation. Jesus knew well that his words would be repeated at Sichem.

Come and see, said she to all whom she met: I have found at Jacob's Well a man who told me all things that ever I did: it may be the Messiah.

The idea that the Great Prophet might have come among them stirred up all the city. No one who knows the East, with its constant restlessness and its religious curiosity, will be surprised that such was the effect of a simple woman's word. The men of Sichem came out, and took their way towards the patriarch's well.

Meanwhile, Jesus, still seated there, seemed to be absorbed not so much in the fatigues of his journey as in the prospect of the work that was about to be accomplished, and now just begun, in Samaria, by his Father's Providence. He ate no food. "Master," said his disciples, "eat, we pray thee." But he refused. "As for me," he said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." They dared say no more, but, without a suspicion, as they were, of his hidden meaning, they said quietly one to another: "Hath any man brought him aught to eat?"

Jesus undeceived them. "My meat," he added, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

The greater a man is the more completely he escapes from the tyranny of his earthly needs; the body lives by the earth, but the soul is nourished by God; and, satisfied by God, sustains and restores the failing body. The sentiment of duty existed in Jesus in its highest and purest form. His conscience was the voice of his Father speaking within him; and obedience was his life. Man fails every hour: distracted, uncertain, and inconstant, he yields to his desires and gives way under sacrifice; the will of God demanded heroic sacrifices of Jesus, whose meat was to do the will of him that sent him. But at this moment the will of the Father was full of gentleness; after the first difficulties which he encountered in Jerusalem and in Judaea, here in Samaria was a land left to him, a whole town which rose and followed him. And, indeed, as he was speaking of that which was his meat, he turned towards Sichem; and the inhabitants came to meet him.

He asked of his disciples: "Say you not, in four months, then cometh harvest? I tell you, lift your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest." The crowd of Samaritans seemed to him as a ripened cornfield. On seeing them come near, he felt a thrill of gladness. "Happy is the husbandman," he added. The full ears are his reward; "he gathers them unto life eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." For we must realise the truth, "One soweth, and another reapeth." The Father has divided the task. "I sent you to reap that which you have not sown. Others have laboured, and ye have entered into their labours."

Jesus was alluding to the patriarchs and prophets, whose word, cast on earth as a divine seed, had slept there for long ages, but now, at his voice and under his action, was to become a harvest ripe for the sickle of his disciples.

The men of Sichem gave him an enthusiastic reception, and begged him to abide with them. Their hostile prejudices quickly vanished: Jesus yielded to their request; he went to Sichem and remained there two days.

The rapid summary of St. John gives us no detail of the preaching in the town of Sichem. The success was extraordinary; at the witness of the woman alone many already believed in Jesus; but when they had heard himself, a far greater number recognised in him the expected Messiah. There was no question of signs and miracles, as at Jerusalem and in Judaea; this despised race, excommunicated by the

Jews, believed as soon as they heard his words. It is probable that he revealed to them, as to the woman, the mystery of his Messiahship and his Kingdom, to which every man is called without distinction of race, on the sole condition of believing in his word. He lifted them out of the contempt of ages, under which the Jews had overwhelmed them ; as they believed in Moses, they believed in the Prophet whose advent Moses had announced, and they saw in him the Saviour of the world.

This ministry in Samaria filled Jesus with a holy joy ; he encountered no opposition, he met no barrier of prejudices or idle doctrines, no human curiosity or mere legalism ; nor sinister authority demanding the credentials of his mission ; no Pharisee opposing to his word the subtleties of arrogant science ; no excited and exacting crowd to demand miracles ; he must have seen in this a foretaste of the future of his doctrine, when one day, beyond the narrow limits of Judaea, it should take possession of the whole Gentile world. This small harvest was the prelude of the greater, for he knew that his Kingdom was that of the humble and disinherited, the weak and poor, the hungry and thirsty after righteousness. The greater a man's need the easier his access to Christ.

He experienced this in his short career. Samaria received him better than Galilee, Galilee than Judaea, the country of Judaea better than the city, the people better than the doctors, the doctors better than the priesthood, the ignorant better than the learned, the sinners than the so-called righteous, Gentiles better than Jews. This is a law of the great work of salvation by Christ ; it is continued and verified through all history : the more a man grows great, and is pleased with himself, his power, his science, and his false virtue, the more opposed is he to the influence of Jesus ; he must be broken by sorrow, overwhelmed by the sense of his misery, in order that he may submit himself and recognise in him, as did the Samaritans, the true Saviour of the world.

Of the town thus evangelised by Jesus there now remains only a miserable village called Balata. In the time of Vespasian, Sichem was moved further west and became the town of "Flavia," now Naplous. But an unbroken and universal tradition has preserved the memory of Joseph's tomb and Jacob's field. The well to which the conversation of Jesus has given a greater renown than the name of the patriarch, is still deep, and in winter half full of water. A broken arch allows us to see the original mouth of the well, surrounded by a heap of ruins; five granite columns, broken, scattered, and buried under the heaps, and overgrown by tall weeds, bear witness to the faith and piety of the first Christians who desired to honour the place where Jesus said: The time cometh when they shall no longer worship on Gerizim nor at Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth.

The corner of the world where these words were pronounced has not kept them; Gerizim and Ebal no longer echo them in that brilliant yet barren landscape; the Mussulmans who pass near this ruined well know nothing of him who one day sat there, who freed their ancestors in the East and their contemporaries in the West from the slavery under which they themselves groan. To find the words of Jesus there, they must be brought, in a believing soul, from the West to which they took their flight.

The words of the Master are Spirit and Life; they cannot be limited by time nor space; the universe has heard them, and hears them still, better than the Samaritan woman or the men of Sichem; they have passed the narrow valley between Ebal and Gerizim, and taken possession of the earth; they have roused by millions those who worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth, as the Father willed.

After this two-days' halt, Jesus continued his journey towards Galilee; the welcome and faith which he had received from strangers, who were half Gentiles, had moved him profoundly. In returning to his country, among his own people, where his destiny as Messiah called him, he naturally thought of the difficulties which awaited him, the rejection which he would provoke, the hardness of heart and violence which he had already experienced at Jerusalem. In his sadness he compared the Samaritan to the Jew, those whom he was leaving with those to whom he came, and he spoke to his disciples words often again to rise to his lips: "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country."[1]

Galilee, however, did not remain strange or indifferent to the increasing renown of Jesus; the renown of his manifestation in the city, the success of his ministry among the rural population of Judaea, the signs and wonders which were added to his personal influence, all contributed to render him remarkable among his countrymen. Moreover, a great number had seen in Jerusalem itself and on the banks of the Jordan, his power of working miracles,[2] which was above all that which struck minds greedy of marvels. Jesus was grieved at this tone of mind; he reproved this vehement desire for miracles; he saw in it secret selfishness, misplaced eagerness, want of confidence, and blameworthy curiosity. He said to them in a tone of reproach: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."[3] However, because of the renown which preceded him, he was received with favour by the Galilaeans.

The little caravan separated; the disciples went each one to his own home, some to Cana, others to Bethsaida and Capernaum. He does not himself appear to have gone back to Nazareth; he avoided it, as at his first return, from motives of which we are ignorant, and went to Cana, where his mother seems to have been still living with relations or friends.

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[1] John iv. 44; cf. Matt. xiii. 57; Mark vi. 4; Luke iv. 24.
[2] John iv. 45.
[3] John iv. 48.

The disciples in their dispersal spread the news of the arrival of Jesus throughout the provinces and in the town of Capernaum in particular, where Peter lived. A miracle increased the glory of the Galilaean prophet and brought his name to the notice of Herod Antipas:[1] "And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son, for he was at the point of death." Messages, visits, and embassies, in the East, are always attended with a certain pomp; the great person who waited on Jesus must have had an escort, with which he entered the Prophet's house. Jesus did not at first appear to listen to his prayer. He knew well that it was not the Messiah whom the nobleman sought in him, but the miracle-worker, and the healer of material need. Such a faith did not move him much. Without first looking to the grief of the suppliant father, but as the Saviour, always more careful to heal the soul than the body, he said: What feeble faith is yours, "except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." This tone increased the father's grief. "The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus was touched with compassion, and saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." The words of Jesus always sank deeply into the soul.

We see here, in a striking manner, with what art he was able to gain entire confidence. He loved those simple souls, which, even before they had seen his miracles, came to him freely, and believed in him with their first faith; and on this condition he gave play to his divine power. In order to gain the confidence of this counsellor of Herod he declared to him that his son was healed, and he, before having ascertained it, without hesitation and without reserve, believed what Jesus said ; he yielded entire faith and went his way. " And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth." The whole family of this officer of Herod believed in the new prophet ; the miracle must have made considerable stir ; that which passes among the crowd does not always reach the ears of the great, and is lost in obscurity, but that which affects the great has its part in the consideration and respect which surround them.

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[1] John iv. 47, etc.

Healing at a distance is a human impossibility, but a divine fact.[1] A man who judges history by what he knows of ascertained forces rejects it, but whoever judges according to the measure of God, receives it as a witness to his infinite power. The first restricts and mutilates it, the second, effacing himself before almighty and overruling power, increases it. This miracle was only the first of those which Jesus was to work in the land of Galilee when he came to fix his abode there; and just as that of Cana was wrought with reserve and mystery, so in the same measure was the healing of this son of this officer of Antipas accomplished with acclaim. It was, in fact, necessary that opinion should be prepared, little by little, for the influence which Jesus was to exercise upon it. Nothing contributed more decidedly to this end than these divine works in which the close and absolute union between Jesus and his Father was shown. He promised the impossible, in the human sense of the word, and he realised the impossible, for those who, after the example of the man at Capernaum, believed in his word.

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[1] This miracle, which supposes in the miracle-worker a superhuman knowledge and power, has, naturally, been rejected by the rationalistic school, like all other facts of the same kind. Denial is easy, but denial does not explain the narrative which the documents have preserved for us. The mythical theory of Strauss has been able to find nothing likely to give body to this legend by any analogous story in the old Testament. It has recalled in this connection that Elijah healed at a distance, and without leaving his house, a certain Naaman, a leper, ordering him to go and plunge seven times in the Jordan. This is to abuse the simplicity of the reader, and ask of him more faith than the miracle itself means.

Weisse has wished to see a parable in this narrative, but the documents are entirely against it. Nothing can legitimate such an interpretation. What is true in it is that the fact narrated is a typical character, like all the other facts in the Gospels. The Gentile at Capernaum is the image of the world of Gentiles, who not having seen Christ as the Jews saw him, yet felt the sovereign action of his divine power.

The sojourn of Jesus in Galilee on this second journey was prolonged from the month of December, 781, to a feast of which the fourth evangelist does not give the name, but which was probably that of Purim or Lots,[1] celebrated in the month of Adar, corresponding to our month of February, two months before the Passover. Jesus, whose centre of activity was still at Jerusalem and in Judaea, went on the occasion of this solemnity to the Holy City. We are absolutely ignorant of the details of his ministry before this journey; but it is probable that he then visited more than once his disciples of Bethsaida and Capernaum, and revealed himself by more than one sign, but this is a blank page, which in default of documents we may not fill with hypotheses. Neither do we know who went with him to Jerusalem. All that can be said, according to the testimony of St. John,[2] is that this arrival of Jesus in the Holy City was of decisive importance in the development of his mission.

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[1] See Appendix A, *General Chronology of the Life of Jesus; II. Inauguration of the Public Ministry in Galilee.*

[2] John v.

CHAPTER VII.

JESUS THE SON OF GOD.

THE first stay of Jesus at Jerusalem and his apostleship in Judaea had produced considerable results. They had pointed him out to the whole nation, to the people and the hierarchy, to those who were indifferent to the Law, and to the fanatical for it, to the unlettered and to the wise. The multitude, in general, struck by his miracles, held him for a prophet; and many, even among those who studied the Scriptures, like Nicodemus, could not refuse to see in him a messenger of God and a Master.

It is, however, to be remarked that the name of Messiah was not pronounced in the tumult of the crowd; the aspect of the Galilaean workman hardly answered to the dreams of popular imagination nor to the prejudices of Pharisaic learning. Jesus, moreover, carefully avoided every word and act which could excite the one or flatter the other party. The vigorous step which he had taken in the Temple by the expulsion of the traffickers disclosed the spiritual reformer consumed by the zeal of God. He was not only like the Baptist, a voice in the desert appealing to the conscience, but an authority which intervened in the very organisation of the theocracy. The rulers were conscious of this from the first, and with that instinct which hardly ever deceives those who feel themselves threatened, they recognised in Jesus a power which they must break or suppress. But the craft and violence of man, his short-lived science and his ephemeral power, his plots and his destructions, have never succeeded in hindering that which ought to be.

In this first encounter with the religious rulers, Jesus had not yet revealed himself; he took an attitude, the firmness of which surprised, and the holy audacity stupefied them ; strong in a righteous deed, which recommended itself by the purest sentiment of religion and justice, he disdained to abate his titles, and retired, avoiding the crowd which he distrusted, illuminating willing minds, leaving the priests astonished, confused and threatening. Ten months later he reappeared at Jerusalem.

Although a certain reserve still characterized the public action of Jesus, yet his influence spread far and wide. If ever his enemies had thought that they could set him aside, his increasing ascendency would soon have scattered this illusion. The moment had come to declare what he was, to explain his divine mission to his adversaries themselves, to prove his right in face of religious authority ; Jesus was now to declare the full greatness of his religious career. The occasion was a miracle of which it is important to know the detailed narrative,[1] for it was these details, brought into light with much bitterness by the Pharisees, which occasioned a new collision between Jesus and the chiefs of the nation.

There was at Jerusalem, near the sheep market, a Pool,[2] surrounded by five porches, called by the Jews Bethesda,[3] a kind of hospital which, during the day, was a shelter to the sick against the wind, sun, and rain. There lay a multitude of sick folk, blind and halt, or with withered limbs. A supernatural virtue was attributed to the water in the Pool: it was from time to time agitated by a mysterious power, and whoever first entered in, after the moving of the water, rose from it sound and whole whatever his infirmities.

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[1] John v.

[2] See Appendix E, *The Pool of Bethesda.*

[3] *Beth-Hesda.* House of Charity.

Now in the midst of these unfortunate people there was a man who had been paralysed for thirty-eight years. "When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

Organic disorder is more than a symbol. It may even be an effect of moral disorder, for sicknesses are often caused by sin. Vice which troubles the soul begets a thousand infirmities which assail the functions of life, upsetting them or staying their course, aggravating or paralysing them. Physical pain thus becomes the chastisement of God. He whose conscience accuses him, said the wise men of Israel, falls into the hands of the physician.[1] The sick man healed by Jesus was, no doubt, one of these sinners; and Jesus reminded him of it. After having given him help he desired to awaken, to elevate, and purify his conscience ; for his divine power only touched the body in order to gain and save the soul. As soon as the paralytic recognised his benefactor he, out of gratitude, began to publish abroad the name of Jesus, without thinking that in revealing to the Pharisees him from whom he had gained his health he might exasperate their envious hatred. It was, in fact, the occasion of new persecution, which marked the second appearance of the Prophet at Jerusalem.

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[1] Eccles. xxviii. 10.

They sought for and followed him ; nor did he then conceal himself, for he had begun the destined strife against his enemies, which was thenceforward to continue till his death ; he endeavoured to convince them, and, if he could not succeed, was to end by confounding them. He passed his days in the Temple, conversing, teaching, and multiplying his miracles. His name was no longer a mystery ; his presence stirred the people more and more, which is not wont to discuss nor reason, and submits instinctively to the charm of every character which has the power to captivate their imagination. No man had ever so profoundly impressed the crowd as Jesus, and therein we must seek the first cause of the natural antipathy which he encountered in the Jewish aristocracy. They would have let him be and his doctrine pass unheeded ; they would have confounded him, in their insolent disdain, with the crowd of publicans and sinners ; but he worked and drew men to him ; therein was his crime.

When men in authority are menaced by one of superior powers, it is his influence that they seek to combat, and they seize on any mere pretext. Everything, moreover, in Jesus angered the rulers of the people and the masters, disturbed their prejudices, assailed their pretensions of national pride or intolerant piety : his Galilaean origin, his humble birth, the boldness of his deeds, his disdain for all the traditions of the Pharisees, the originality of a doctrine and language unlearnt from any master, and dependent upon no human authority.

In its secret wisdom, Providence had seen good to leave Jesus bare of all those qualities which, humanly speaking, availed to conciliate public opinion. Even when he manifested himself by word or act, some detail in one or other was almost sure to wound the sectarian customs or doctrines of one or the other party; thus he illuminated and blinded at once, caused edification and scandal. Upright hearts recognised him, prejudiced minds rejected him ; he above all others was the Being who hideth himself, as is proved by his whole life.

He was of the blood-royal of David, but his family had fallen in rank ; he was born at Bethlehem, but passed for a Nazarene ; he spoke as no master ever spoke, but he had no licence to teach ; he multiplied the signs of his power, but they were not those which the Jews demanded ; he healed, but often on the Sabbath day; he called himself Messiah, but without playing that earthly part which the doctors demanded ; he insisted on his divine sonship with an increasing force of affirmation, equalling himself to God, but it was precisely that divine filiation which offended the religious chiefs, and was for them the greatest of blasphemies ; he founded the Kingdom of God and promulgated its law, but this kingdom and law were the end of the Jewish law and power ; Moses had passed away, and Israel must change or die.

When they learned the healing of the paralytic man at the Pool of Bethesda, the Jewish authorities did not even think of wondering at its marvellous side. Like all prejudiced, narrow, and ill-conditioned minds, they took hold of the detail which displeased them and resented it, wounded in their empty religion. That Jesus cured the paralytic with a word was nothing to them ; that he had healed on the Sabbath day and ordered a man to carry his bed, despising the Sabbath law of rest, was a scandal. Their arbitrary rules and human traditions, their scholastic decisions, and miserable casuistry, were essential ; whoever would not bend himself under this yoke was blameworthy, a sinner, and a revolutionary, who must be reprimanded and persecuted. Nothing is more inexorable or more irritable than minds given over to this kind of religious aberration; the man who loves God and worships in truth is gentle, but he who loves himself under the cover of religion is always bitter and violent. True piety is courteous, false piety is hypocritical and ill-natured. The great majority of the members of the hierarchy, Sadducees and Pharisees alike, had strangely perverted the Mosaic Law; and this inveterate perversion, blinding and debasing them, must have closed their minds to the truth, and inspired in them, against Jesus, a repulsion and violence which nothing could conquer.

Jesus was therefore accused by the Pharisees of violating the Sabbath.[1] It is possible that this accusation was a judicial act, and that he had to appear before the tribunal charged with judging crimes against religion. Perhaps, however, the intervention of the Sanhedrin did not go to such a length, and some members were told off only to reproach Jesus for his misunderstanding of the Law. In either case the answer of Jesus must be closely studied, in the summary which the fourth Gospel has preserved for us; he took the occasion offered him to declare clearly and solemnly what he was, to show to the Sanhedrin and its emissaries wherein his religious work consisted, and to declare those undeniable rights on which he founded his public action.

The reproach addressed to Jesus did not in any degree rest upon the Law of Moses. It could only be founded on arbitrary rules, and the most childish subtlety, of which the scribes and doctors were overfull; but these scrupulous rules were more to them than the Law itself; foolish accessories made them forget the essentials; their mean ideas took the place of the Word of God. Blinded by the letter, strangers to the spirit, they stifled the Word instead of understanding it. One of these strange rules was precisely that which forbade the carrying of even the most trifling object from one place to another on the Sabbath day, without the most urgent necessity.[1]

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[1] The term ἐδιωκον, which the Vulgate has translated by the expression *persequebantur*, may be interpreted in the sense of bringing to justice.

Jesus, in order to justify himself, disdained in such circumstances to point out to his accusers the vanity and nothingness of their customs and ordinances: he had a higher right to declare; he did not appeal from these Pharisaic subtleties to the pure Law of Moses, nor claim the inalienable liberty of doing good with which no human precepts could interfere; he did not discuss, but affirmed, invoking as his own the right of God and the example of his Father; and in the full consciousness of his divine sonship, he said to them: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

God knows no rest, he is activity itself; his power never fails, by him all things are, in him they live and move; the cessation of his influence would be the annihilation of every creature whom his ever active word bears,[2] nourishes, develops and attracts.

Man's freedom is controlled by his conscience and his uncertain reason, which dictate and codify laws for him. The life of Jesus was only ruled by the will and example of his Father; he had heard and seen him; his human actions were only the execution of this ineffable will, and the imitation of this eternal example. What his Father willed, he willed; what his Father did, he did: as no human authority can weaken the authority of God, so none can weaken his authority; his right of action is equal to that of God. The Father works without ceasing for the salvation of mankind; this work is constant and progressive as his love, and experiences no cessation nor truce.

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[1] *Talmud, Schabbat*, fol. 6, 1.

[2] Hebrews i. 3.

And I, said Jesus, work as God. No sabbath can suspend the tendency of every creature towards God. Such an answer plainly affirmed the divinity of the Messiah and the Messiahship of Jesus.

These two truths, which sum up the whole Gospel, form the base of the Master's work, they are seen in all his discourses, and explain his whole life, the hostility and hatred which he excited, the tragic end of his career, and the extraordinary influence which he has exercised above all since his death.

The Jewish doctors and the members of the priesthood were obstinate in denying both. Forgetting the constant doctrine of the prophets, leaving on one side their sublimest teaching, absorbed by ceremonial and legal questions, led astray by their political and national prejudices, declaring only the unity of God of which they did not know the mystery, they, for the most part, never chose to recognise the first right of Messiah, the right which alone could explain his function. They gave him all his privileges: the general judgment, the salvation and regeneration of the world, the foundation of the Kingdom of God, victory over all his enemies, an eternal throne at the right hand of God, association with his power and glory; but they obstinately refused to him his divinity, and in their daily prayers they ceased not to say: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord," interpreting this formula in an unitarian sense which excluded a true sonship in God.

However, more than one teacher avoided this perversion of Messianic ideas, and was careful not to oppose the holy unity of Jehovah to the divinity of the Messiah. The authors of the apocryphal and Sibylline books certainly did not share these scholastic errors; the formal witness of John the Baptist to the divine sonship of Christ did not remain without an echo.

Now, the title of the Son of God is precisely the only one which Jesus claimed as Messiah; and such was the violence of the prejudices held by the scribes, doctors, and priests, that he necessarily gave scandal to them and excited the whole hatred of their religious faith. Jesus would in no degree minimise the matter, but was to declare what he is without equivocation or disguise, and, each time that he had before him the representatives of learning and authority, was to speak to them without parables, in perfectly clear terms which no sophistry could veil; nor was he to wait for occasions, but to make them. Thus it was that when speaking of the Pharisaic observance of the Sabbath, he affirmed his divine sonship, and explicitly declared that he was the equal of God. This was the first solemn assertion which we meet with in his life.

The emissaries of the Sanhedrin were shocked and scandalised, and complained that he not only broke the Sabbath, but he dared to call God his Father, thus making himself equal to God.[1] From that moment Jesus seemed to them a blasphemer whom they must seek to kill; and he heard around him murmured threats of death. But he, who never feared to throw himself against prejudices, did not allow himself to be intimidated by the hatred which these teachings might let loose on him. For him the will of the Father was all; death was of no account if this will called him to die; he came into the world only to bear witness of the truth.

His words grew more solemn and more decided; far from weakening this equality with God, advanced against him as blasphemy, he explained it, and gave it its full force.

The type and guiding law of his actions was nothing created and nothing human, but God himself, the influence of the Father. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."

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[1] John v. 18.

Man cannot see God, nor by himself rise so far as to take God for the model of his life; but the Father loveth the Son: the same spirit of love constitutes the ineffable tie between them, and the Father reveals to the Son all that he does; between them there is the same light and the same infinite power, equality is perfect, union absolute; that is the whole secret of the nature and functions of the Messiah. The works which the Son has done with the Father, he said, are but little; he will do greater works than these, at which ye shall marvel. Jesus thus declared his Messianic destiny; he taught no mere dogma, but he affirmed facts in the divine order; he did not speak abstract language like a doctor, but revealed his consciousness and bore witness of what he saw and what he was. He added: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

All his Messianic character is in this work of life. The prophets had already spoken of it, in hidden words which the doctors could not ignore. The field of dry bones seen by Ezekiel, was mankind lying dead.[1] The voice of God saying to these dry bones, "I will send my spirit upon you, and ye shall live," was the voice of the Son of Man, the Messiah. When Isaiah exclaimed: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."[2] Isaiah saw the great era of Christ

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[1] Ezekiel xxxvii. 1-14.

[2] Isaiah xxvi. 19, etc.

Even the rabbis understood this. They taught that the Gentiles had not life,[1] and the dry bones were the sons of men who had not received the dew of the Law. In thus affirming his mission before the scribes in Jerusalem, Jesus did not speak to them a language hitherto unheard; he did no more than open the book of which they thought they had the key, and of which their blind learning could not guess the deep meaning.

His affirmation became stronger and more earnest as he spoke; but his auditors continually grew more obstinate. You look for the resurrection of the dead foretold by the prophets, at the advent of Messiah. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. Marvel not at this." This is but the first hour, the first resurrection, that of souls dead in trespasses and of manhood withered as dry bones; but there shall be a second resurrection. "For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth."

In distinguishing the two extreme points of his work, Jesus gave it all its greatness, he allowed it to be seen that this greatness included all both on this and on the other side of the tomb, and he cleared the confusion made by many people between the two resurrections, the one moral and mysterious, hidden in the depth of the soul; the other material, startling and decisive, to take place before the whole world. The former was already transacting itself under the word of Jesus, the Son of God concealed in the unknown Son of Man; the second was still future, full of hope and terror, rejoicing those who had not rejected the voice of the Messiah, terrible to those who should continue obstinate to his appeal.

In order the better to understand these conversations, we must get rid of the prejudice that the documents which contained them are shorthand notes, and we must accustom ourselves to treat them as scattered and condensed recollections.

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[1] Ketubb., fol. 3, 2.

The thought of Jesus on the divinity of the Messiah, on his universality and work, was always and everywhere identical; the form varied according to circumstances, but the basis remained the same. Whether he formulated his doctrines in an intimate conversation with Nicodemus, a learned Pharisee, or with an unlettered woman in Samaria; or whether he was exposed to a hostile party like those who here accused him, we shall find him always with these essential notes: divinity of person and divinity of functions: man is powerless to play a part which can belong to God alone.

Christ is the source of life, not that material life which passes away, earthly and intellectual, such a life is compared to the shadow of death, but a spiritual and eternal, heavenly and divine life; to spring from him, like a torrent inundating mankind; to receive it we must listen to his word; whosoever shall believe on the Son of God will pass from death unto life, and whoever will remain deaf to his appeal will never arise from the dead.

Thus stripped of all element of Judaism, the work of Messiah answered to all that the prophets had announced, and appeared in its pure beauty and eternal grandeur; it did not flatter the prejudices of a nation deprived of sight, but found an echo in the conscience of man and in his highest aspirations.

Man knows that he is in moral misery and death, but in the depth of his nature, overwhelmed by evil, he keeps the instinct of his divine destiny; he is hungry and thirsty for a life which shall fulfil his vast desire for truth, perfection, and eternity, and it is to him that the Son of God speaks in order to raise him and give him life.

In spite of their unitarian superstition, their malevolence and their hatred of opposition, their pride of power and haughty pretensions, Jesus made the Jews listen to him; he constrained, I do not say their admiration, but at least their silence and attention. The most obstinate men are subdued by the power of the human word when it is at the service of truth and virtue; the divine words of Jesus had an irresistible ascendency; they impressed and charmed, overthrew and raised again, held anger and hatred in suspense, overruled the crowd and astonished those who thought that they knew; met every concealed objection, divined the inmost thoughts of those who spoke to him; it was the two-edged sword which pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.[1]

Every Jew trembled when he heard of the Messiah; no doctor, no prophet had ever spoken of him like Jesus: he lifted every veil, removed every figure, showed truth without shadow and without reticence, in its bare simplicity, retaining only the mystery of its depth.

When Jesus set forth to the Jews who had come to accuse him, the divinity of the Son of God, his equality with the Father, and the greatness of his Messianic work, he felt that, even if they accepted the doctrine, they would indignantly reject the idea that he was the man who should embody it. The doctrine would run counter to their prejudices, and offend their strict ideas, but his person was a scandal to them: the one wounded their opinions, but the other humiliated their self-love. They could not think it possible that a Galilaean, an unknown man of the people, and a sinner, should be the Messiah of the nation. Nothing is more difficult to oppose than the wounded pride of a class or a people; opinions are often subject to modification and compromise, but wounded pride blinds the spirit and shuts the heart; it is obstinate and unforgiving. Jesus, during his whole life, found this obstacle in his path: he encountered it here in all its violence, and in order to remove it he declared his claim.

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[1] Hebrews iv. 12.

The declaration alone was sufficient for simple souls who allowed themselves to be drawn towards the light, and who, welcoming all truth, soon tasted its sweetness in their heart; but for those prejudiced minds who resisted, disputed, and narrowed themselves to the compass of their own theories, it raised the scornful objection that whosoever gave witness of himself had no right to be believed; justice needs the witness of a third party, and reason demands proofs.

Jesus, unyielding before the hostility and malevolence of his adversaries, answered that in judging himself, he was not among those whom personal ambition or self-will constrained to play a part and undertake a mission.

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye hath neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

The argument was logical and admitted of no reply. It adduced all which could convince the most faithful and enlightened, even the most tenacious and exacting Jew: the prophetic authority of John, who was yet living, and whose independence and virtue none could impugn, the striking signs by which Jesus affirmed and justified the fact that the power of God was in him; and lastly the Scriptures, the Book of the Law, the rule of thought and life, which was for all Israel the eternal and infallible word.

Though armed with all these witnesses, Jesus did not succeed in conquering and persuading the obstinacy of the doctors; they rejected John, whose severe words had scourged them; they did not deny the miracles of Jesus, but attributed them to the power of evil; they did not reject the Scriptures, but refused to understand them, using them merely to justify their faults, and consecrate their material religion. Nothing can subdue the man who asserts his freedom of will, and trusts in his own power; he has the terrible privilege of defying truth, reason, evidence, the appeals of goodness, the entreaties of love, the charm of beauty, and even God himself.

The invincible obstinacy against which Jesus contended was decreed in the designs of the Father and in his own destiny. He experienced it this time in its bitter reality; and whoever, in whatever degree, has this experience, learns that one of the greatest sorrows of life is the sight of a hardened man, rejecting truth and fortifying himself within the circle of his errors and miseries.

With a sadness mingled of gentleness and threats, Jesus spoke these last words to the messengers of the Sanhedrin: "I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" On these eyes so firmly closed, Jesus allowed a last ray of light to shine; he clearly recalled the two Messianic passages in Moses, the prophecy of Jacob denoting the time when Messiah should appear, the time at which the secptre should depart from Judah,[1] and the prophecies of Moses himself, concerning the distant coming of the great prophet like unto him, and threatening that those who did not listen to him should be cut off from the people.[2]

Jesus, without being disquieted, withdrew himself from his judges and abandoned them to their blindness, knowing that he had everything to dread from their hatred.

The mystery of human incredulity was unveiled in the end of this discourse, and is prolonged throughout the ages, just as it showed itself under Solomon's Porch. The Gospel history has not, like human history, any fresh starting-points, but as it continues it is always identical with itself, unchanged in a world of change and death. The Son of God appears greater than all things, welcomed by the witness of great minds who confess him, virtuous men who adore him; his life-giving works accompany him, attesting the power with which he was filled; and the Scriptures, which spoke of him before his birth, remain an open book where alone amongst men he shows himself the Desired of all the ages. Great men, leaders and masters of thought, shut their minds, like the Pharisees, to these luminous titles. They disdain and accuse the sole Being sent to give that eternal life for which the human soul hungers.

And this because they love not God, nor truth, nor goodness, but love themselves alone; obstinacy of spirit has its root in self-love: he who loves himself sees himself alone and prefers all that flatters him to God; he is his own god and rejects all that is not he accepts only what conforms to his theories and interests.

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[1] Genesis xlix. 10.

[2] Deut. xviii. 15-18.

Strange that all these are egoists united to each other by the bonds of mutual flattery, and call each other hypocritically master and lord, but each one believes himself to be master and lord. They all have their Moses; to-day it is called science and pure reason; but, like the Jewish parties, each interprets it at his own will, nor chooses to see that science and pure reason, each after its own fashion, bear witness, like Moses, to the Son of God, who alone says the last word on that origin of things which science is powerless to explain, and the last word on things to come, about which pure reason has always been uncertain.

This phase of the life of Jesus between the first calling of a few of the disciples and this second journey to Jerusalem, shows forth the hero and opens his active ministry. The manifestation was overwhelming, the beginning decisive.

Jesus declared himself the Son of God, and began his ministry at Jerusalem itself, in the face of the people and the authorities; Jerusalem was itself the nation, the centre from which emanated two powers which were obeyed; public opinion and authority. It was known what he was and what he desired; wherever he should bend his steps henceforward, the eyes of the people and their rulers would be upon him.

The effect was gained; from the north to the south, from Hermon to the confines of Idumaea, from the west to the east, from the Mediterranean to the vast plains of the Arab kingdom of Aretas, Palestine was aware that a great prophet had arisen, calling himself the Son of God, proving his mission by miracles, and claiming faith in his word. It was not ignorant that men's minds were divided in regard to him; that he attracted the crowd, but that the rulers of the people, with few exceptions, the doctors and the elders, the aristocracy of fortune, of the priesthood and of learning, the high priests and the Sanhedrin, were in open opposition to him.

They regarded him as a false prophet, an impious blasphemer; they watched him and followed his steps, and, fearing that the crowd, led astray by him, should escape from their authority, they were resolved to persecute Jesus, and treat him with all the rigour of their law directed against those who led the people astray and blasphemed Jehovah.

Thus at Jerusalem Jesus had only succeeded in gathering round him from among the multitude a few simple and upright souls, in creating among the upper classes a few unknown and secret friends, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, and in provoking in the official world, the guardian of traditions and laws, an invincible and menacing antagonism.

The enmity of the priesthood against Jesus from the very first hour might have hindered, paralysed, and indeed annihilated his action; but God restrained the power of evil, and mastered its impetuous hatred. On the other hand, Jesus knew the exact measure of the opposition he might excite, without prejudice to his work, and, as his hour was not yet come, he had the wisdom to flee from danger when the danger became too pressing.

In this wisdom we must seek the historic motive for his abandonment of Judaea and the chief city, and for seeking in Galilee more quiet and hospitable surroundings, which allowed him to found the work of his Kingdom. This was the promised land; since Judaea rejected him, he retired from her, realizing one of those prophecies which six centuries before had already described his life:—

"Nevertheless," said the seer, "the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.[1] The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."[1]

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[1] The Sea of Galilee.

An important religious event, which produced a profound emotion in the Jewish nation, warned Jesus that the time had come to allow his influence to be widely felt. God takes to himself those whom he sends. The facts of their life, the incidents which surround them, the part that they have to play, are all in harmony; all that happens to them comes from that invisible hand which orders everything; and the intended work is often accomplished in spite of, and unknown to, those who desire to stifle it.

John had been thrown into prison;[2] this bold and indomitable prophet, this penitent, hungering after righteousness and full of reproaches against the vices of his countrymen, he who laid bare all hypocrisy and had spared none in his holy wrath, had not hesitated to denounce the sins of a prince. His voice, which the presence of Jesus had rendered gentle, found all its vehemence to blame and condemn the conduct of Herod Antipas. The tetrarch, following the impious example of his father, had put away his wife, the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, to marry a princess of his own blood, Herodias, the wife of his brother, Herod Philip. This adulterous union shocked every true Jew: John was the avenger of the outraged conscience of the nation; he reproached Herod with his crime in the name of God.

The tetrarch might perhaps have accepted in silence the humiliation which the prophet inflicted upon him; he was a man of timid character and undecided mind; but Herodias could not brook the insult. This imperious woman had not much trouble to make the man in whom she had inspired a blind passion, the instrument of her hatred. As always, a pretext was made of the necessity of looking after public order: it was pretended that there was a danger in the crowds drawn by John, and his arrest was decided. It was necessary to silence his burning words. The soldiers of Herod received the order to seize John and carry him off to the frontiers of Peraea and Arabia, to the fortress of Machaerus in the steep and solitary mountains of Moab.

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[1] Isaiah ix. 1, 2.

[2] *Antiq.* xviii. 5, 2; Matt. xiv. 2; Mark vi. 14; Luke iii. 19.

When his task is finished, the man of God disappears, leaving an open field to his successors; the task of John was done, the ways were open and souls awakened; the harbinger might be silent, Christ was to speak and work.

BOOK III.

THE MINISTRY IN GALILEE. THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

CHAPTER I.

GALILEE AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

ON the news that the Baptist was cast into prison, Jesus quitted Judaea and retired to Galilee,[1] in the power of the Spirit, in order to preach there the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.[2] Jewish tradition, dating from the Babylonian exile, divided the land of Israel into three parts: Judaea; the parts beyond Jordan, or Peraea; and Galilee.[3] Samaria was excluded; the orthodox teachers refusing it the privilege attached to the sacred soil. They did not, however, confound it with the Gentile territory. Its streams, its dwellings, its paths, they said in their formal science, did not defile the strict and faithful Jew.[4]

In the time of Jesus, this division was consecrated by popular language and opinion;[5] the land of Judah eclipsed all the others. While Galilee bore the humiliating name of the "land of the Gentiles," Judaea remained the Holy Land, privileged above all others. It was the seat of the chief city, the Temple, and the government, and it was the political, national, and religious centre. Galilee and Peraea, the countries on either side of the Jordan, formed, after the death of Herod, a tetrarchy governed by one of his sons, Antipas. Galilee, properly so-called, is that part of Palestine the most renowned for fertility of soil and variety of scene. The territory of Tyre and Sidon, the blue chain of Carmel, form its limit on the west, Samaria on the south; on the north it extends as far as the river Leontes and the chain of Anti-Libanus; on the east it is bounded by the Upper Jordan, the Lake of Gennesareth, and the territories of Gadara, Hippos, and Scythopolis. All the beauties of nature are united in this little spot of earth, whose superficies is only from 90 to 100 square miles; it has elevated plateaux, plains, hills and high mountains, wild gorges and fresh valleys, springs without number, a sacred river, and a little inland sea.

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[1] See Appendix A, *General Chronology of the Life of Jesus.* I. *Inauguration of the Public Ministry in Galilee.*

[2] Matt. iv. 12; Mark i. 14; Luke iv. 14.

[3] *Sheviith*, c. 9, 2.

[4] *Talmud, Hierosol., Avoda Zara*, f. 44.

[5] Matt. x. 5; Mark iii. 7.

Josephus calls it a great wheatfield.[1] Forests of oak and pine clothed its mountains; olive woods alternated with vast meadows and cultivated fields; numerous country houses spread themselves on the shores of the lake under the palms, and lay upon the hills in the midst of fig trees, olives, and vines. The great commercial roads, which link the principal towns of the coast, Ptolemais, Tyre and Sidon, to Damascus and Mesopotamia passed through Galilee and gave to it much animation. The traveller who explores the country at present, cannot resist a feeling of sadness when he sees it depopulated and in ruins.

The strong Galilaean race has disappeared. What was Peraea beyond Jordon from Machaerus as far as Pella and Gadara, is only a vast solitude where the Arabs encamp under their tents, graze their flocks, and reap wheat and barley. Inner and Upper Galilee are inhabited by indolent fellahs, who till the ground, and sow the bottom of the valleys and those hillsides which rains and torrents have not rendered desert. Forests no longer clothe the mountains; there are no towns nor fortresses, no monuments nor palaces. The

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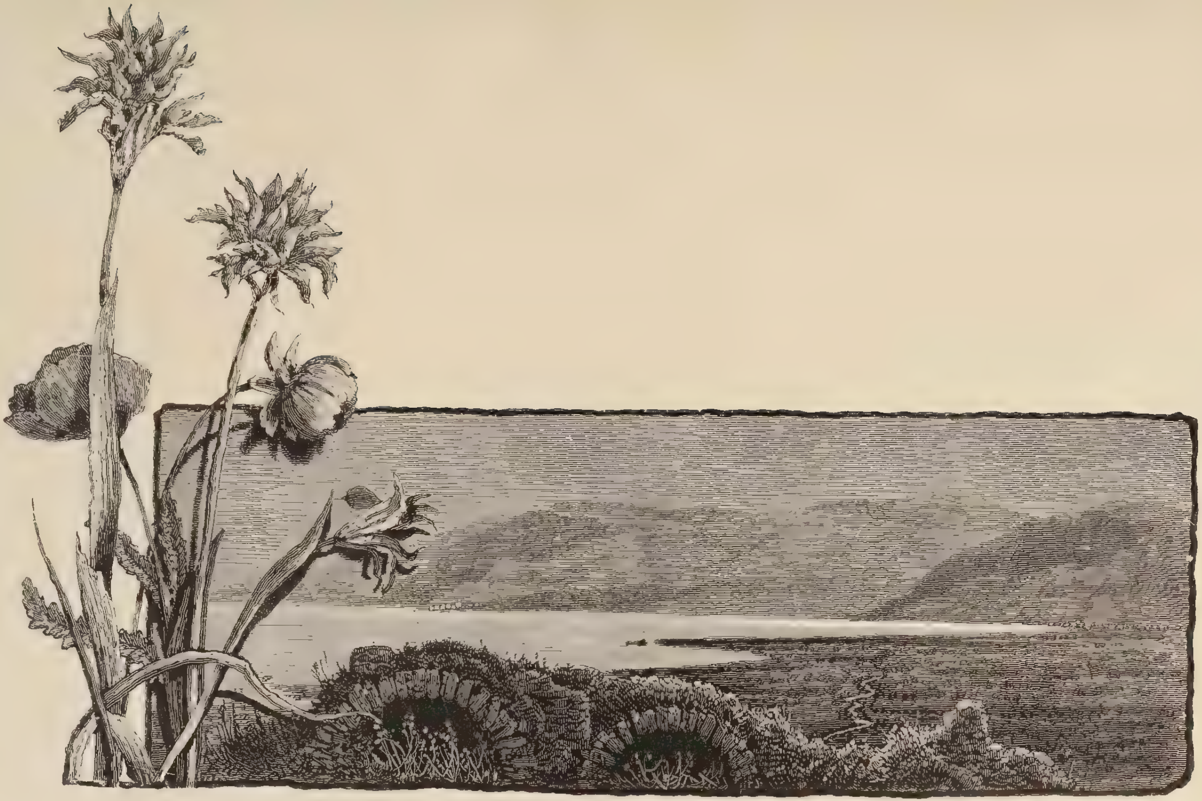
[1] Cf. *Antiq.* xiii. 2, 3; *Bell. Jud.* iii. 3, 1.



THE PLAINS OF GENNESARET, FROM KHAN MINYEH (CAPERNAUM).

The town of Tiberias in the distance.

villages are only masses of miserable square houses, ordinarily built on some little knoll, each grouped round the mosque and its minaret.

The springs and rivulets, instead of enriching the land, render it marshy, or lay it waste. The lake of Gennesareth is desolate; the towns, which once crowded its shores, are heaps of half-buried ruins. Tiberias, Tarichaea, Hippos, Gadara, Gerasa, Julias, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Magdala, have slept for centuries. Anyone seeing their ruins, half concealed in the tall herbage; crumbling walls, mutilated columns, thresholds, broken gates, bricks and vases in the dust; would say that they were the bones and ashes of a people reduced to annihilation by some cataclysm, and left there without burial. Yet this luxuriant nature, in spite of neglect, has a wonderful energy, which shows us what the will and energy of man might obtain from it. In the early year the soil is covered with vigorous herbage; springs gush forth on every side, and all along the valleys which they water great oleanders grow by the sides of the streams, tufts of agnus castus, palms, and gigantic terebinths.

A very few caravans still traverse this dead land, composed of merchants going from Damascus to Acre or Jaffa, exchanging the products of the West against those of Asia, or of Bedouins coming to sell wheat and barley from the plains of the Horan and Peraea. They pass with their long files of camels across the hills and plains, scarcely breaking the silence of this mute and wasted land.

Among the ruins which cover it and which are to be found at every step, in the midst of the poor villages of fellahs, four towns only absorb and concentrate the whole of the life: Acre, Safed, Tiberias, and Nazareth. Acre, where the Arabs come to sell their corn; Safed and Tiberias, where the Jews still expect Messiah; Nazareth, redeemed from the disdain of ages, and lit up for Christians by memories of the Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus. That is all that remains of the life of that province in which Josephus counted in the first century fifteen fortified towns, more than two hundred villages, and two or three millions of inhabitants.[1]

The men of Galilee were a brave and vigorous race, agricultural and warlike, turbulent and jealous of their liberty. Their ancestors of Zebulon and Naphtali bore a good record in the history of the conquest of Canaan.[2] Ten thousand of them rose against their king, Jabin, at the voice of Deborah; led by her, they exterminated his army at the foot of Tabor and reddened the waters of the Kishon with the blood of his corpses; their valour, which the prophetess sang, had passed into the veins of the Galilaeans.

Among them Judas the Gaulonite[3] recruited his first partisans. The cry of this revolutionary mystic found an echo in the heart of these proud mountaineers; he had no difficulty in persuading them that they ought to know one only Lord, their God, and bear every torture rather than bow themselves under the Gentile yoke. It was a crime in the eyes of these intractable sectaries to sacrifice victims offered by the Roman Senate for the health of Caesar and the empire; they looked upon it as sacrilegious to pray for infidel princes. The impetuous zeal with which they sought their national freedom gained for them, some years after the death of Jesus and in the last struggles against Rome, the name of "Zealots."

In spite of its great memories and its energetic patriotism, Galilee, which had neither doctors nor celebrated schools, had no consideration in those times of formalism and legal religion, in which the scribes and the masters had all the credit. The inhabitants of Jerusalem and the pure Judaeans, disdained it; the Galilaeans seemed to them uncultivated, ignorant, simple, and rude; they derided their dialect and their accent.[4]

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[1] *Vita Joseph.*, 5, 45.

[2] Judges iv. 5, etc.

[3] Acts v. 37; *Antiq.* xviii. 1, 6; xx. 5, 2; *Bell. Jud.* ii. 8, 1.

[4] Cf. Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmud.*, p. 151. Leipzig, 1864

This little people was better than their reputation. Their neighbourhood to the Gentiles, which so rapidly affected the creed and the race of the Samaritans, did not subdue their robust fidelity. Galilee and Peraea, in spite of the many Roman and Syrophoenician inhabitants, remained essentially Jewish, and this alone should have been enough to inspire respect in the people of Judaea. Gratitude, moreover, should have made them just. Since the reign of the Asmonaeans, those persecuted in Judaea had always found a refuge in the mountains and inaccessible caverns of Galilee, and brave defenders in the children of that warlike race.

Providence avenges the despised, and chooses those whom human pride rejects. Galilee, and not Judaea, was to see the inauguration of the Kingdom of God ; its peasants, the fishermen of its lake, the tax-gatherers at its ports and on its roads were to be the instruments of this great work.

When Jesus, avoiding the hatred and menaces of Jewish authority, left Jerusalem and resolved to carry the Gospel into Galilee, his renown was great. His eloquence and doctrine, and, above all, his miracles, made of him an extraordinary being ; he drew the crowd to him, struck their imagination, awakened their curiosity and enthusiasm.

He set himself to travel through the whole country, its towns and villages, to attend the small synagogues at the hour and day when the people assembled there. The reputation which preceded him always assured him of a warm welcome ; crowds ran to see and hear him. After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the minister gave him the book, and after having read, standing as was the custom, the passage pointed out, he sat down and explained it.

The evangelization of Galilee held a considerable place in his public life ; it lasted from eight to nine months, from the Feast of Purim in the year 29 to the Feast of Tabernacles in the same year. The whole work of Jesus, which he called his

Kingdom, the work which was to fill the world under the name of the Church, was founded and organised in this brief period.

The man of genius finds a whole life too short to instruct his disciples, to found his institutions, to raise a state and reform a religion : he has need of many years for the realization of his plans ; but Jesus was content with a few months. In that little tetrarchy of Herod, the most despised portion of the land of Israel, he revealed what he was, took possession of the conscience of men, in the person of a few poor Galilaeans, whom he made his apostles, and he inaugurated with them and in them that Kingdom which was to know no limits in space and time.

The apparent poverty of the means is out of proportion with the greatness of the results, and this contrast is the greatest enigma of history. It is the mark of Jesus. Independent criticism is arrested before him and does not hesitate to recognise the mark of God.

The prophet of Galilee appears to criticism with a divine and creative force ; all the human names of philosopher, doctor, legislator, reformer, and even that of prophet, which the crowd gave him, are insufficient ; under the appearance of the Son of Man was truly the Son of God.

To understand the power of his action upon a fresh class of subjects, and the incidents which marked his mission, we must know the precise state of opinion and conscience among those to whom he came to preach the Gospel.

The rigid party of the Pharisees held sway over the learned class. In its teaching and its practices it affected a severity, all the greater because the lower classes, mixed with the numerous Gentiles of the country, had less zeal for observances, and less fanaticism against the customs and religion of foreigners ; it shared the dislike of the masses for the Roman dominion, and only resigned itself with difficulty to pay the annual tribute to Caesar.

The aristocracy was Sadducean; it formed that party of the Herodians which had accepted as legitimate the reign of the Herods in spite of their Idumaean origin; it had both fortune and honour, occupied the great administrative functions, and in Galilee, as in Judaea, lived in opulence, disdainful of the people, a friend to the tetrarchs, hostile to every new influence which threatened to stir the religious conscience or patriotism. One of the most unpopular functions was that of Collectors-General. They had for subordinate agents the receivers and the Publicans or tax-gatherers, who were charged to collect the tribute-money. In this detested class plunder and injustice were the dominant vices; the people, ground down by taxation, hated them; the Pharisees, whose patriotism was offended, could not forgive them their alliance with Gentiles, and their making themselves the instruments of national servitude; they treated them as outcasts, as thieves and robbers, and would not even take their witness in courts of justice.[1] They were more numerous in Galilee than anywhere else, for the soil was fertile, the population dense, the roads frequented, and the traffic around the lake between the towns of Galilee, Decapolis, Trachonitis, Ituraea, and the country of Damascus was in full activity.

They were recruited from the lower classes, among those who lived without following in all their rigour the customs of the Pharisees, and which the devout party, in their pride and ritual piety, treated with the greatest contempt, calling them impious and sinners, like the usurers, thieves, gamblers, shepherds, sellers of fruit, who gathered in the sabbatical year, and public entertainers who gave pleasure to the crowd by training birds to fight.[2] The greater number in the villages and towns were despised by the Pharisees, who composed a little provincial aristocracy, the ascendency of which was uncontested because it was the personification of patriotism, and, which the Oriental and the Jew place above everything, the knowledge of their sacred Book and rites.

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[1] Sanhedr., fol. 25, 2.

[2] *Ibid.*

The Pharisaic and Sadducean doctrines which, at Jerusalem, had a considerable influence on the middle class, did not penetrate the masses. In every country the common people are obstinately set against the refinements of science and the subtleties of casuistry. That which affected the crowd in the provinces was the ardent love of country, the idea of a Messiah, the deliverer, and, as a religious practice, the great pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

For some months the Messianic agitation excited by John the Baptist was extreme; the Galilaeans were attracted to him who announced the coming of God; many had been affiliated to him as disciples. The imprisonment of the prophet, far from calming the movement, had increased its energy; the prisoner of Herod was girt about in the eyes of the people with the aureole of a martyr. Persecution had not stifled the word of the prophet, but increased and consecrated it: all those whom he had roused still looked and waited; the publicans and sinners who had confessed their sins and been baptised asked even more eagerly when, and how, the Lord would come, and what were the roads by which they would see his appearance.

One word summed up these hopes and agitations: "The Kingdom of God is at hand."[1] The phrase, borrowed from Daniel, designated the reign of Messiah, succeeding the great kingdoms of the earth, and eclipsing them by its splendour and its blessings. The idea which the phrase somewhat vaguely expresses, was the life and soul of the Jewish people, and the main-spring of its evolution. It inspired the prophets with their greatest oracles; all of them had sung of it, from

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[1] Matt. iii. 2.

Joel to Zechariah and Malachi; Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai and Daniel;[1] all, for more than five centuries, had nursed in the soul of the nation the hope of the Kingdom of God and of the Messianic age, all described, in glowing and even more unmistakeable terms, the era to which Jehovah was, little by little, leading his people and mankind.

The apocalypses of two centuries[2] which preceded the advent of Jesus were full of it. It was an axiom in the Jewish schools that every prayer into which did not enter the thought of the Kingdom of God was not a prayer at all.[3] In the ritual of the Temple, the people answered the prayers of the priests by the cry: "Blessed for ever be the name of the glory of the Kingdom of God."[4]

On the lips of Jesus this expression gained fire and force; and went straight to the heart of the people. Every nation has its phrases which, at certain times, exercise a magic power. Diversely understood and interpreted, they serve as a rallying cry; the thought which they translate is always sure to awaken attention, command sympathy, and inflame passion; they possess this irresistible charm because they express, with greater or less accuracy, the ideal which at any given time attracts and excites a country, an age, a civilisation.

For a great number the phrase remained vague; the crowd neither defines nor analyzes, and, when it attempts to understand, it belittles and materialises everything. The best men among the Jews maintained their trust in the great promises of God, his mercy and faithfulness; they awaited his manifestation, but did not define it, for fear they should misunderstand it.

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[1] Cf. Joel ii., iii.; Hosea xiv.; Micah v.; Jeremiah xxiii. 4; xxx., xxxi. 31-40, Ezekiel xxxiv. 10-23; Isaiah xxxv., xlii., xlix.. l., li., liii., lxi., etc.; Haggai ii. 1-9, 18-20; Zech. ii., iii.; Malachi iii.; Daniel vii.

[2] Cf. the *Book of Enoch* and the *Little Psalter* of Solomon.

[3] *Babyl. Beracoth*, fol. 40, 2.

[4] *Babyl. Taanith*, fol. 16, 2.

Beyond these it is easy to see that two main currents attracted and led men's minds astray: the one earthly and political, the other legal and religious. Those who were swayed by the first expected to see, under the name of the Kingdom of God, the re-establishment of the kingdom of Israel, deliverance from the yoke of the Romans, and a Messiah who should be the earthly chief of his kingdom In the simplicity and eagerness of faith they already saw Jerusalem as the central city of all nations, they contemplated the House of Jehovah as open to the Gentiles, thronging in crowds to adore God, and recognize in their Messiah an universal king.

Inflamed with hope, they were thrilled at the thought of a new world, overflowing with joy, a true age of gold for mankind under the Messiah. Simple faith always cradles itself in illusions, and thinks of no obstacles ; the Galilaeans abandoned themselves all the more to these dreams because they answered so well to their independent and warlike nature.

Those whom the legal and religious current carried away desired above all the triumph of the Mosaic Law, as the scribes and the Hassidim, since Ezra's time, had interpreted it ; they would resign themselves to a foreign yoke, provided that the God of Israel became the God of the universe and that the Torah was accepted as the universal law. This current prevailed in the schools and among the rulers of the people, the Sadducees, the friends of authority, and the moderate Pharisees of the school of Hillel.

And as accumulated disasters discouraged their patriotism, this tendency could only increase ; it was afterwards formulated in a doctrine growing clearer and more definite under the pen of the Talmudists.[1] The Kingdom of God, for Jews biassed by political and religious prejudices, was only their own kingdom. All substituted their own ideas for the thought of God, some wishing to subdue the world to one nation, others desiring to enslave consciences to an imperfect law; but the Jewish nation was destined to perish, and the Mosaic Law to be completed. Jesus was the only being who comprehended and revealed in its fulness the divine thought which is summed up in the phrase, "The Kingdom of God."

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[1] Cf. *Beracoth*, c. 2; *Gemara Babyl.*, fol. 13, 2, f. 15, 1; *Zohar. Levit*, f. 53.

He adopted this popular expression in his Galilaean mission; none answered better to his designs and work, for it contained all his doctrine and plan; it was his glory, his reason for existence, his whole genius.

Every word, every action of his life, had reference to it. When he preached, it was to publish the Gospel of the Kingdom and explain what it was; when he taught the crowd on the mountain, it was to promulgate its laws; when he spoke to the people in parables, on the shores of the lake, it was to set forth, in images, the mysteries of the Kingdom, its origin and evolution, its strifes and victories; when he prayed and taught us to pray, it was that we should ask for its advent; when he multiplied his miracles, it was to establish that he was its founder and Lord; when he chose his apostles, it was to perpetuate his Kingdom after him, and make sure that it would be extended in the heart of mankind; when he died, it was that by his death he might overcome the obstacles which hindered its establishment; when he poured the Spirit of God into the hearts of those who believed on him, it was because the outpouring of the Spirit is the essence of the Kingdom; when he desired that all should believe in him, it is because he is the only centre whence men can draw the Spirit which alone gives God the Kingdom; when he was transfigured before a few of his disciples, it was to show them what the human being becomes in this Kingdom; when he disclosed to them in prophetic discourse the scenes of the future, of the end of time, and that which is beyond, it was to show them the splendour of the universe reserved for the new race of the sons of God.

The thought of the Master does not exhibit the least trace of the prejudices of his nation and time ; it was equally free from the national and political element of the future Zealots and the legal and Mosaic element of Pharisaism. We shall not find in the whole of history a single great man who has not, in some degree, made a pact with the errors of his time and the narrowness of his surroundings ; but Jesus avoided this inferiority of the greatest men. His thought was pure, and had all the marks of truth : universality, eternity, immutability. In that they have misunderstood and falsified his thought, almost all modern historians have mistaken his person, his work, and his vocation. Of all the ideas which human intelligence has ever conceived, none has ever equalled it in height, in depth, in breadth, and extent ; always fresh and always necessary, it is at once most human and most divine.

It will be said then that God did not rule over mankind, since the coming of the Kingdom was spoken of as good news. The world is the kingdom of matter and its laws, the kingdom of the animal and his instincts, the kingdom of intelligent and free man, in slavery to nature that he does not know, to powerful instincts which he cannot master, confounding God with his creatures, adoring the creature and forgetting God, multiplying his kind upon the earth, given over to his errors and vices, to his passions and sorrows, to slavery and death. In this night, full of darkness and delusion, in the midst of all races and peoples, all civilizations and religions, one people, one race, one civilization, one religion, kept, through twenty centuries, the pure worship of the true God, but the terrible God, who dictated to the Jew his law of righteousness and of slavery, only sketched out his Kingdom. The spirit of fear by which he curbed the will, had not succeeded in taking possession of the perverted world. A great hope shone only in certain souls, interpreting the desire of universal sorrow ; and it was this hope that Jesus was to crown.

His mind was full of this work, and therefore he said, " The time is at hand." The greatest prophets could only hope: one of them marked the expected hour, but Jesus alone, because he possessed all in himself, was able to give all that mankind demanded in its confused aspirations.

In order that this heavenly Kingdom might be realized, it was before all things necessary that God himself should intervene personally in his work; now this personal intervention, so clearly announced by the prophet, was accomplished in Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, possessing at once, in all their fulness, the power of God and the power of man; it was necessary that the God who was unknown and misunderstood should reveal himself in his truth and in his will; now, Jesus alone by his absolute union with God, Jesus who alone knew the Father and all the secrets of infinite wisdom, brings us this double revelation; it was necessary that the Spirit of God, of which Christ had received the whole anointing, should be communicated to free man: now Jesus is the only source of that Spirit. Carnal man was to lend himself to that communication, to renounce himself, to be transformed, and to believe: Jesus demanded this of him and gave him the power to accomplish it. But the Kingdom of God being intended for all ages, all nations, and all civilizations, Jesus chose his workmen, whose duty was to continue his work, visibly and infallibly, to propagate and extend the divine Kingdom: and this he called his Church.

Considered in its essential elements, the Kingdom of God implies a chief, a law, and subjects. The chief is Jesus; the law is the living Spirit of God or the will of the Father; his subjects are the assembly of men who by faith recognise their head, open their hearts by repentance to the Spirit, and accept his will in love.

Considered in its evolution, it, like all that grows, has three phases: its origin, its laborious growth, and its consummation. In its initial phase it is concentrated in Jesus and the first believers in him; in its growth, it includes the apostolic hierarchy, and all the believers who obeyed that hierarchy as the depository of the powers of the unseen Christ; in its consummation it represents the glorious term of mankind regenerated in the glory reserved for the elect. These three states, bound each to the other, proceed each from the other; the Church springs from the divine germ, which is Christ, growing like the branches of a giant tree which is to cover the world; and mankind, entirely transfigured by Christ, springs out of mankind suffering with him, given over, like him, to persecution and strife, till the Spirit of God glorifies it in the fulness of life, as was the case with Jesus.

The Kingdom of God thus embraces all times and all worlds; it is prepared upon earth, where it suffers violence, but it is to fill the heaven, at the time ordained by him who rules all things, who alone has the secret of his work and of the time.

We see, therefore, that the Kingdom of God is the kingdom of the Spirit, since the Spirit of God himself has founded it, and that, in order to participate in it, man must renounce the flesh and be born in the Spirit; that it destroys nothing, but fulfils all things, since it communicates to man the power and the light of God which complete all things; that it is not of this world, since the world contains only matter, physical life, and reason, which are all inferior to the Spirit of God; that it suffers violence and is only won by an exercise of the will, for man, a slave to matter, to his instincts and vices, is obliged to transform himself with difficulty, and renounce matter, his passions, and his needs, in order to enter it; that it is within man, for the Spirit of God makes his habitation in the soul and conscience; that it is eternal, for the Spirit of God which constitutes it, is above all times and ages, all that passes away or dies; that no power can prevail against it, for no force can prevail against God; that it is peaceful, for the Spirit of God is love, and where love reigns, there reign also order and peace. We see finally how this invisible Kingdom is realised socially and visibly, by the Church founded on Jesus, in order to call together, little by little, from out the world and the ages, predestined souls, perpetuating his Spirit, his word, and his power.

The advent of the Kingdom of God, as Jesus conceived it, is no longer a Jewish, but a human question. The Gospel which contains this news is henceforth the book for all, and he who realised it is no longer merely the Messiah of the Jews, but the universal Mediator. The Kingdom is more than the divine and definite transformation of the religion of Israel: it is religion itself in its absolute perfection.

With Jesus a new Kingdom in its fullest sense was truly inaugurated on earth; an infinite and eternal Kingdom, which should overrule and bring to perfection the earlier kingdoms of matter, physical life and mankind. Above matter, the animal forces, and reason, there should be henceforward in incessant activity the living and personal Spirit of God. He took possession of mankind in Christ; he was to pass beyond Christ, to conquer all souls of good will, all races, all civilisations; he was to be the supreme refuge of the poor, the sorrowful, and the humble of this world, of those overwhelmed by present realities, who look for a new progress in truth and goodness, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who wish to conquer evil and do not find in themselves the power to subdue it. These are the greater number, the crowd; these are mankind. For all others, those who are satisfied and fortunate, the strong who oppress the weak, the proud who pride themselves on their limited knowledge, their legalism and empty wisdom; the corrupt who deceive themselves, and do not know the torment of the infinite: for all these the Kingdom of God remains inaccessible and incomprehensible; they will remain in darkness and sorrow, without end and without hope.

The Galilaean period of the life of Jesus had an interest far beyond the poor Jews in the tetrarchy of Antipas. What was passing there was to ring through the universe; the words spoken there were to be repeated to the four corners of the world; the work founded there, round the lake of Gennesareth, was to extend to every shore; the law promulgated on the Mount was to be no passing and special code, but the eternal and universal code which should rule every conscience; the miracles accomplished there were to be more than simple cures of the sick and afflicted, they were to be signs of the invisible healing of wounded hearts and paralytic souls, of darkened minds of which the world is full; the chosen apostles were to become the great Church, they were to be perpetuated through the ages, to invade the earth and conquer it for Christ.

To accomplish his work, Jesus had the force of God which in him was translated into its human equivalents of wisdom, power, and goodness. His wisdom gave light, his power bore rule over matter and spirit, his goodness attracted all to him. Nothing which could give efficacy and authority to speech was wanting to that of Jesus. The Gospels, which never dream for an instant of apologising for their hero, disclose the extraordinary influence which he exercised. One phrase occurs over and over again in their narrative: the multitude, they say, was astonished.[1] Even those who were sent as spies returned overwhelmed: "Never man spake like this man," they said to those who sent them.[2]

What we call eloquence, the genius of the spoken word, was in him not an art, but a miraculous gift of the Spirit. No apostle nor prophet has equalled him; none has had as he the secret of persuading and moving; no one has instilled into the mind stronger and more sublime convictions, more heroic virtues, more energy and more love. His word has been one of the levers by which he has moved the world;

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[1] Matt. vii. 28; Mark vi. 2; Luke iv. 22, 32, etc.

[2] John vii. 46.

he knew how to speak truth to all in season. For seven months he held entranced the whole people of Galilee, had led them to follow his steps far from towns and villages, into the desert, to the shores of the lake of Tiberias and its hills.

Human eloquence is often empty, uttering only commonplace imperfect truths, mutilated by ignorance, disfigured by error, and exaggerated by passion. It is rarely animated by the fire of the Spirit; hence its weakness and sterility. Its feeble light is soon quenched, together with the wavering thought and timid virtue whence it draws its inspiration. The fullest and most emotional words scarcely overpass the limits of a nation or an age; beyond that they die, like delicate seeds which can only germinate in a few furrows.

The words of Jesus, which lay bare his whole soul, embody the thought and power of God. They were Spirit and Life, they possessed supreme originality, boldness and clearness, strength and appropriateness; they cut and thrust like a two-edged sword. Even when he occasionally borrowed expressions from the prophets he did not repeat them, but gave new light to the ancient formulas, together with a new sense; he completed and fulfilled them. His words sparkled with inspiration from the fulness of the living God, and carried with them the living God. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," Jesus dared to say, "but my words shall not pass away."[1] In fact they still remain in the human consciousness like stars in the night.

The human race admires aphorisms gathered from his lips as the perfect and ideal expression of the truth. No prayer can replace his, or hold towards God, any other language than "Our Father, who art in heaven." He has given us the formula for all the heroic virtues; for charity: "Love your enemies, and do good to them that hate you";[2] for humility; "Thou hypocrite, who canst see the mote in thy brother's eye, but dost not see the beam in thine own eye";[1] of mercy towards the sinner: "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at her";[2] of pardon for executioners: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do";[3] of consolation and strength in sorrow: "Come unto me, all ye who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."[4] He has created a science of happiness, in those maxims which seem to defy human wisdom, and have never deceived any. Happy are the poor, the meek, the sorrowful, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the peacemakers, the persecuted; these are they who shall inherit the Kingdom of God.[5]

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[1] Mark xiii. 31.

[2] Matt. v. 44, etc.

The word of Jesus possessed creative energy. When a man expresses a truth, he can only hope for good, but has no power to produce it. Jesus did the good of which he spoke; his words were those of one who had sovereign and irresistible power. With a word he put to flight and subdued evil spirits, healed the sick, calmed every sorrow, gave movement to the paralytic, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead. He had the gift of transforming the soul. Whoever came near the prophet, entreating him with faith, was sure to be heard. Gifts fell in showers from his lips and his hands; not some isolated miracle only manifested the Spirit whose unction he had received,[6] but floods of miracles. The witness to this is distinct; miracles were not an exceptional phenomenon in the life of Jesus, they were the normal state, the constant signs, of his inexhaustible goodness; they were produced as soon as any approached him with confidence and a sense of need.

The wonder-worker attracted and subdued still more than the evangelist; the people are everywhere the same in the East as in the West; power enthrals more than intelligence, startling facts more than eloquent words, miracles more than sermons. But when these two elements are united their influence is irresistible. No one before Jesus, and no one after him, has appeared on the earth so armed with the double power of God. The prophets had only intermittent rays of his light, and a force which they could borrow for exceptional works: Jesus possessed, as his own gift, eternal truth which enlightens, and infinite power, which life and death, nature and mankind obey.

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[1] Matt. vii. 3; Luke vi. 41.

[2] John viii. 7.

[3] Luke xxiii. 34.

[4] Matt. xi. 28.

[5] Matt. v. 1, etc.

[6] Acts iv. 27; x. 38.

Another element of popular power in Jesus was his kind and gentle character. He did not flatter the people as those who lead them astray, but he loved them. Everything in him was at the service of this love. He had compassion on the poor, the weak, the unhappy, the sinful and despised. This was in a marked contrast with the attitude of the Pharisees, the doctors, the leaders of every kind, priests, elders, scribes, who make a precept and almost a virtue of despising the populace. This character of Jesus was manifested in his whole life, in his words and deeds. In seeing him, the well-known passage of Isaiah about the servant of Jehovah recurs to mind: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."[1]

A man endowed with superior genius overawes by his very superiority; and, in spite of himself, is in some degree an object of alarm. Power isolates; men fear it and avoid it rather than submit to it; it even renders ill at ease those very persons to whom it deigns to bend. Incapable of inspiring confidence and affection, strong men have to resign themselves to rule by fear.

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[1] Isaiah xlii. 1, etc.

Jesus escaped this common law; the harmony and power of his faculties, his infinite gentleness, charmed and attracted all who were weak, suffering, downcast, unfortunate, that is to say, the people. Himself born among the poor, and destined to a martyr's life, he exercised the charm reserved for men who bear the aureole of suffering.

His sorrowful vocation was ever before his eyes: he knew and felt that he was destined to an ignominious death; the thought veiled his whole being in sadness, but the love of God and men was over all, and sadness mingling itself with his goodness, rendered this still more expressive and more attractive.

The preaching of the Gospel in Galilee had a thoroughly popular character. Jesus, first taking the synagogues for the theatre of his preaching, where the crowd came together every Sabbath, was sure of reaching the entire population. He did not proceed like John, the prophet of the desert, who called the people to him, but he took the initiative by seeking of himself its presence: a sign of power and goodness.

If John stirred the Jewish conscience by the simple declaration of the advent of the Kingdom of God, Jesus must have exercised a far greater sway when he published to the Galilaean multitude that the Kingdom of God had come. Under any circumstances, this stirring news was at once certain to raise grave difficulties. The first was connected with the very idea of the Kingdom which was preached, the second with that of Messiah its founder. Everything in the doctrine and person of Jesus assailed the prejudices of the Galilaean people and doctors.

They had expected a political kingdom : Jesus announced a spiritual and interior Kingdom ; they had hoped that the Law would be dominant : Jesus prophesied the Kingdom of the Spirit ; they had desired a Messiah armed with earthly power : Jesus presented himself without any human authority, with no other force than that of his Father, the wisdom which teaches eternal Truth, the power which heals the soul and the body ; they dreamed of a triumph of the nation, and of the race of Abraham after the flesh, over all peoples: Jesus came to inaugurate a nation and a race of men regenerated by the Spirit ; they were persuaded that the name of sons of Abraham, and faithfulness to the Law of Moses, would suffice for their incorporation into the new people of God : Jesus demanded only moral transformation and faith in his word.

All was against him : we shall never find in Jesus that art, so familiar to politicians, of flattering opinion in order to gain it. He accommodated himself to weakness alone, by veiling truths too lofty for the people to understand ; and he tamed men's minds in order to lead them gently to the light. But even the power of God cannot avoid the resistance of man here below ; Jesus encountered it, and he inaugurated his Galilaean apostleship by failure.

The Gospel documents do not define the villages and towns of Galilee, to which he went preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God. St. Luke, however, tells us in detail of a journey which he made to Nazareth at this time :[1] and gives an animated narrative which brings before us a scene in a Jewish synagogue, and gives us the first commentary of Jesus on the nature of his Kingdom.

It would seem that Jesus had not returned to his own country, since the day when he had quitted it, in going to the Jordan to receive baptism from John. He would now return and preach the Gospel in the town where he had grown up in obscurity, and consecrate to it the first-fruits of his Galilaean apostolate.

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[1] Luke iv. 16, etc.

On the Sabbath day he came, as usual, to the synagogue, where so often he had been seen, seated in silence, in the lower places, undistinguished among his countrymen, listening to the reading of the Law, and the commentaries of the doctors and the elders. The unknown workman now reappeared with the renown of a prophet, and curiosity drew all eyes upon him. Men in the little town must have been impatient to verify all that was told of him ; the rulers of the synagogue must have regarded him with a certain arrogance ; the limited knowledge of the doctors in the provinces disposed them but ill to receive the words of an unlettered artisan, who, having never been at school, had no title to teach, and openly broke with their customs.

After the recitation of the accustomed prayers, and the reading of the Law, Jesus was honoured by being asked to read a passage from the Prophets. At the order of the president, the "Hasan" offered him the sacred roll ; he opened it, and found the following passage from the Prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn ; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."[1] He closed the book, gave it to the

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[1] Isaiah lxi. 1, etc.

"Hasan," and sat down. All looked on in silence. Then he said: "What ye have heard, is this day fulfilled."

Jesus explained to the people of Nazareth that it was he on whom the Spirit of the Lord had descended, that in virtue of this divine unction he was the Messianic envoy, the chief of the Kingdom of God; and he taught the nature of this Kingdom as Isaiah had prophesied it.

Such a picture had nothing which could flatter the notion then in favour among the Pharisees and in the schools. The fanatical patriots and the Zealots of the Law did not therein find their conventional ideal. Under its figurative language they sought in vain an allusion to the future restoration of the kingdom of Israel, to its enfranchisement from the Roman yoke, to the triumphant extension of the Law in which the pride of the people wrapped itself; it had only to do with the love and infinite mercy of the Eternal: which, indeed, created the expected Kingdom; it spoke only of the poor, the humble, those in chains and in prison, those afflicted and weeping: these were the elect of the new Kingdom. They exist everywhere, in the whole world, as in Israel, for everywhere the human soul suffers; waiting in chains whose evil crushes them, everywhere they call on him who alone enlightens and consoles, gives freedom and peace. He who should carry the good news to every conscience, this consoler, this liberator, did not exist among men; it must be that God would send him, and, in order that he might accomplish his work, the Spirit of God must be in him. By this Spirit he would bring about the reign of God and set up the Kingdom destined to accomplish and crown the evolution of things.

The approbation and admiration were unanimous. We may judge how moving was the accent by the effect produced, how great were the unction and eloquence with which Jesus spoke of the love of God, and the sorrows of the soul deprived of him. How eagerly he pointed out the joy reserved for those who would receive the good news, place the diadem upon their brow and be perfumed with the oil of peace, put on the mantle of joy, and grow in righteousness like the terebinth trees of God.

However, as soon as the first excitement died away, an objection sprung up in the minds of a great number. Jesus had clearly declared himself the Messiah; it was asked by what right he dared to claim this title, and his humble birth was remembered with disdain: "Is not this," they said, "the son of Joseph?"

Opposition grew warmer; and he was pressed in an offended tone for the signs upon which he founded such high pretensions. Impartial reasoners remain calm; but minds whose preconceived ideas are wounded are not impartial. At that time fanaticism was almost universal among the Jews: they demanded signs, and exacted these from Jesus as a justification of his claims as Messiah. Jesus refused them to the Nazarenes, as he always refused them to those who demanded them in a like spirit of unbelief. He gave them only to those who had faith, never to those who discussed with pride and ill-temper. This is a remarkable fact in his whole life, and a characteristic feature of his conduct. But signs had already been accomplished at Jerusalem, in Judaea and at Capernaum; and surely he had a right to rely on them before his fellow-citizens, who were scandalised that the son of Joseph should declare himself the ambassador of God. "And he said unto them: Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country."

Jesus remained inexorable. Nothing had any weight with him save trust and love; no distrust affected him, no importunity made him give way. Like his Father, he resisted the proud and violent, and loved the humble and the meek. And he said: "Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.[1] And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian."[2] Jesus declared a hard truth to his assailants. He intimated by these examples that the Kingdom of God is not confined to the people of the prophets, that this obstinate people would not receive him, that the Messiah would be sent to the Gentiles; to those paupers and lepers of whom the poor woman of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian were the type. Nothing could more cruelly wound the religious pride of the Pharisees and their false patriotism.

The teaching of Jesus was, however, only that of the prophets about the Kingdom of God and the Messiah himself; but those whom error and passion lead astray, never see anything beyond that which caresses their passion and flatters their errors. Truth does not enlighten, but irritates them; they do not look any more, but blind themselves; carried away by anger, violence is their only inspiration; they curse, excommunicate, stone, and kill.

Exasperated by the words of the Prophet who judged them unworthy to be witnesses of his miracles, angered by his language about the Gentiles and the Holy People, the Nazarenes rose in wrath. In defiance of their Law, without previous judgment and without trial, they cast him out of the synagogue, drove him from their town as an excommunicate person; and, in their fanaticism, endeavoured to cast him from the top of a rock.

A divine power guarded Jesus so that he escaped from this outburst. The Gospel shows him to us calm and gentle, among all these excited crowds; no one laid hand upon him, they dispersed on either side and he went his way.[1] None had power over Jesus. The Spirit which filled him kept him safe. He went as the Spirit carried him, into the midst of men; who, often as they banded themselves against him, were powerless to hurt him unless he surrendered himself to their attacks. He quitted Nazareth, and must have wept over it, for if nothing gives him more joy than faith, so nothing makes him so sorrowful as unbelief.

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[1] I. Kings xvii. 9.

[2] II. Kings v. 9-14.

It is the lot of all those who are meek and humble to be misunderstood and persecuted. He took the way to the lake across the mountain by Cana and the plain of El Batouf and directed his steps towards Capernaum.

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[1] Luke iv. 30.

CHAPTER II.

JESUS AT CAPERNAUM.

THE Lake of Gennesareth is the gem of Galilee; its waters are not of an unchanging blue, they resemble in their varying tints the opal rather than the sapphire. To this jewel the mountains form a beautiful setting. On the west, the grey heights of Safed, the steep rocks of Wady Hamâm, Kurn-Hattin, the summit of Arbela and the mountains of Tiberias; on the east, the last of the series of green slopes, which descend, as it were, in waves from the high country of Gaulonitis, and which in places rear themselves up to fall again precipitously; on the north, the hills of Chorazin, and in the distance the great mount of Hermon sparkling with snow—close the horizon on all sides. To this immense circle there is only a narrow opening in the south, which forms the valley of the Jordan and makes a way for the river. The southern sky, framed between the blue and cloudy masses of the mountains of Beisan and Ajlun, is of a silvery whiteness.

Volcanoes have rent these mountains and hills, as they have shaken the wild tracts around the Dead Sea, and dark blocks of basalt, which have been thrown up, are to be seen on all sides. But yet what a contrast there is between the Dead Sea and the Lake of Tiberias, the one is an abyss, the other a cup; the anger of God seems to pervade the one, his love the other; here there is a gloomy and terrible desolation, there a peaceful serenity. The lake measures about thirteen miles in length from north to south; it expands, however, towards the west shore, where the shore describes a large semicircle from the little mount of Mejdel to the promontory of Khan el-Minyeh; its greatest length is from eight to ten miles, and its form is an irregular oval.

When the sky, brilliant with white light, is reflected in the lake, it appears to glitter as the snow of Hermon. The eye cannot distinguish where the lake ends and the sky begins. The hills on both shores soften in outline and in colour as they recede; the nearest are of a dark violet colour, the more distant are of a pale blue. In the evening, after sunset, the lake seems to be asleep; and its waters, glassy and without ripples, take metallic tints. Seen at its full breadth, the lake fades into the land; a single line, brilliant as a wire of steel, marks the shore. The confused reflections of the hills appear as broad purple belts on a green background.

Occasionally a breeze comes down from the mountains, and, without ruffling this beautiful still surface, causes a vibration almost like a shudder. As the day closes in, the colours of the lake gradually fade and become merged in a violet grey, like the sky. When the stars rise, the breeze freshens, the waves break on the shingle, lap against the clusters of oleander and make the great reeds tremble. The lake awakes from its slumber and speaks with sounds of infinite sweetness. It is thought that the lake was called Chinneroth in olden times because it bore the form of a harp, the *kinnor* of the Hebrews. It has its harmony no less.

In former days, when Jesus sailed upon these waters, a number of towns bordered the lake,—Capernaum, Bethsaida, Mejdel, Julias, Kersa, Gamala, Tarichaea, Hippos and Kufeir. Caravans were numerous on the roads around the lake, and came down to it by the Wady Hamâm, El-Armud, and El-Nashi from Sidon, Tyre, and Acre, and by the Wady

Shukayif and Semak, from Damascus, Gaulonitis, Ituraea, Trachonitis, and Hauran.

At the present day Tiberias is the only town standing, besides two or three miserable fellah villages. Everywhere there are ruins, confused heaps of rough or hewn stone, which treasure nothing of the past except the name. At nightfall fires gleam on the western shore; these are the fires of Bedouins encamped in groves of sidr in the midst of the long grass. There are no longer caravans, but rows of camels may be seen carrying their nomad masters and all their families across the fields, with the women and children sitting on the rolled-up tents.

It was here, on the borders of this predestined sea,[1] that Jesus, driven from Nazareth, came to seek refuge.

Capernaum was one of the towns most frequented by the caravans. It was situated at the northern point of the lake, a little nearer to the western shore than to the mouth of the Jordan, and stood at the entrance of the Wady Nasif, which contained the road leading to Damascus through Gaulonitis, on the gentle slopes which descend to the lake from the heights of Safed. Its houses extended down to the beach. The fishing industry was very active, and the little creeks served as harbours for the fishermen's boats. There was a special market at Jerusalem where the boatmen from the lake went to sell their dried fish. It is difficult to give the number of the population of Capernaum. As it was a frontier town of the tetrarchy, it had an enclosure of walls, a tax-office, and custom-houses. The inhabitants were proud of their synagogue, which they owed to the munificence of a centurion.

Only heaps of shapeless ruins, half buried under the earth, remain of this town, where Jesus dwelt. The extent of the ruins, which cover an area less than a mile in length and about half a mile in width, denotes that it was a small city. Even the name has almost disappeared: Capernaum is now Tell-Hum.[1]

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[1] Isa. lx. 2.

As we walk over these tomb-like mounds, and follow the walls almost level with the ground, it is impossible to reconstruct the ancient town. The synagogue alone is recognisable by its magnificent ruins. Its larger courses of polished limestone remain in place. We can measure the size of the building, and count the four rows of pillars which divided the interior into five naves. The threshold of the great door, the mark of the hinges, the entablatures, the shafts of the pillars, fragments of the frieze, and the acanthus-leaves of the capitals may be seen.

Probably this is the very spot where Jesus came and spoke every Sabbath day for several months. Close at hand, with its back to the eastern wall of this edifice, another building of more recent date may be recognised; it is no doubt the church built by the Jewish convert Josephus, in the time ot Constantine, on the site of Peter's house, the dwelling-place of Jesus.

Centuries and revolutions have passed over Capernaum, fulfilling the denunciations cast upon the town by the Prophet of Galilee, because, misled by the gentleness of his advent, it would not receive the salvation which he brought. The disloyal town has disappeared, but the lake, the country, the sky remain unchanged. There are the very hills which Jesus ascended, alone or with his disciples, to pray and to speak to the people; the very paths which he followed, the same wave-worn stones on which he rested, the same shores covered with oleanders and agnus-castus along which he roamed. The horizon is the same; on the west, towards the green plain of Gennesareth, the Valley of Doves, with its steep and reddish rocks, by which he came from Nazareth, and the little mount of Mejdel with its ruined tower, possibly the ancient dwelling-place of Mary Magdalene; nearer, and close to Capernaum, is Bethsaida, the home of his most loved apostles; on the east, Julias, and the lonely mountains where he for the first time multiplied the loaves of bread; the country of the Gergesenes, and Kersa, where he cast out devils; on the south, the boundless lake, the sky flooded with light.

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[1] See Appendix D, *Verification of the Site of Capernaum.*

It is not possible to say under what circumstances the flight of Jesus to Capernaum occurred. Was he accompanied by his mother and by members of his family? Did he stop at Cana? Did he take some of his disciples with him? The silence of the Evangelists forbids us to answer these questions. But it is of importance for us to observe that Jesus, though cast out and repudiated by the Nazarenes, steadfastly continued his great work.

Even in this flight he began to attach to himself by the closest ties the disciples who were to labour with him. Hitherto they had not always followed in his train; they had returned to their own families and to their own work, after having accompanied him on his journeys to Jerusalem. On their return from the Feast of Purim, when Jesus proceeded towards Nazareth, the disciples dispersed, each one taking the road to his own home.

Jesus, on approaching the shores of the lake, near Bethsaida, was followed by an increasing multitude. The people pressed upon him, says one Evangelist,[1] to hear the word of God As he walked along the beach he saw two ships, but the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. One belonged to Peter; this he entered, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land; then he sat down, and from the ship he taught the people who remained on shore.

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[1] Luke v. 1.

When he had finished speaking, he said unto Simon: "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." "Master," said Simon, "we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." He did so, and they took such a great multitude of fishes that the net brake. They beckoned to their partners, who were in the other ship, to come and help them, and when these had come, they filled the two ships so that they began to sink. When Simon saw it, he fell at Jesus' feet. 'Depart from me," he said, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

The whole character of Peter is revealed in these words: spontaneous, frank, impetuous, and disinterested. They were amazed, both he and all that were with him, at the sight of such a draught of fishes. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were there. Jesus then said unto Simon: "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." The cry of Peter had touched him. The man who recognises his own unworthiness grows great in the sight of God. Peter, by speaking of himself as a sinful man, acknowledged the holiness of his Master. This feeling of his own nothingness and of the greatness of Jesus made him worthy to be initiated into his own high destiny. The first condition of apostleship is distrust of self.

"And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James and John his brother, who were in a ship mending their nets. He called them, and they left their nets and their father, Zebedee, in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him."[1]

The first outline of the public work of Jesus now begins to show itself. The calling of the apostles is the first shoot of that living growth which will develop into the visible Church. The work to which he calls his disciples is the work of drawing men to him, to his teaching, to his law.

In his first appeal on the banks of the Jordan he had

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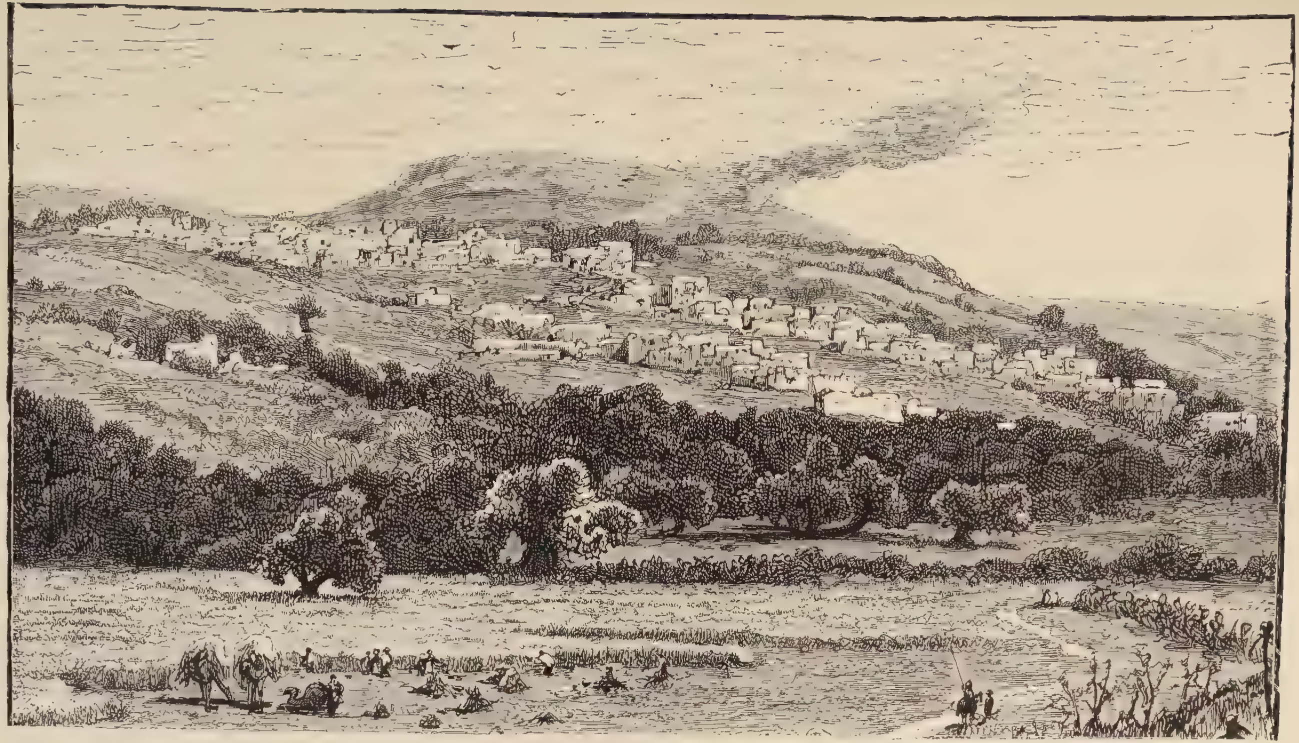
[1] Matt. xiii. 18-22; Mark i. 16-20.



KEFR KENNA, THE TRADITIONAL CANA OF GALILEE.

attracted men to him, without telling them whither he was leading them, but now he makes known to them their great destiny in words of the striking symbolism which he so often used: "Fishers of men."

The little sea of Galilee represented the world, the four fishermen of Bethsaida the forerunners of that numberless band of apostles who were to cast the net for mankind. The design is immense, the workers nothing; but Jesus calls them, and just as God, whom he calls his Father, created the world out of nothing, so Jesus also will save it with nothing. The weakness of man will bear witness to the strength of God.

Jesus, attended by his four disciples, arrived at Capernaum.[1] He was not unknown, for he had made a short stay there before his first journey to Jerusalem for the first Passover of his public life.[2] Some months later the healing of the son of the steward of Herod the tetrarch had made him famous.[3] The prophets had declared that the light of God would shine on the borders of this sea, where Capernaum stood, even to the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali.[4]

It was the Sabbath day, and Jesus and his disciples went to the synagogue, where he preached. The impression he made was very great; he separated himself from all the Masters, from the Pharisees, and from the Scribes; he did not, after their fashion, appeal to the authority of the Elders, nor make use of the name of Hillel, nor of Schammai, but spoke in his own name and applied to himself, with sovereign authority, the words of the prophets; so great were his power and his conviction that, in spite of the novelty of his teaching, even those men who were slaves to formula could not resist the charm of his personal influence.

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[1] Matt. iv. 14; Matt. viii. 14-17; Mark i. 21-39; Luke iv. 31-44.

[2] See Book II., ch. 5.

[3] See Book II., ch. 6.

[4] Isaiah ix. 2.

An unexpected incident occurred which called forth in Jesus the exercise of a new power, and which increased still more the admiration of the crowd. There was in the assembly a man possessed of an unclean spirit, who cried out suddenly with a loud voice and demanded of Jesus: "What have we to do with thee? Let us alone, Jesus of Nazareth. Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Jesus rebuked him. "Hold thy peace," he said to him, "and come out of this man." The unclean spirit tore him violently, threw him to the ground, in the midst of the people, and went out of him uttering a great cry, but without doing him any harm.

A movement of fear and amazement ran through the assembly. Everyone asked: "What is this? he commands even the unclean spirits with authority, and they obey him."[1]

This scene is the first recorded in the Gospel narrative in which the sovereign authority of Jesus shows itself over the unclean spirit of evil, which invisibly tyrannises over mankind, and which visibly possesses certain men.

In his temptation he had conquered it for himself; by casting out devils, he was to subdue it in others. Such facts must neither be suppressed nor slurred over; it is right that they should be explained, for they are closely connected with the great question of evil, and to understand their meaning, according to the Gospels, we must pay attention to the teaching of Jesus on this point.

No being is isolated in this vast creation; all are linked together by invisible chains.

These mysterious relations, deep and unchanging, establish the organic and living unity of the universe. Matter is under the dominion of an unknown force, which governs its transformations, its metamorphoses, its combinations, and its evolutions. Spirits hover around him who is the very source and centre of their intellectual and free activity : some, bound to him by love and by the sovereign will whose commands they fulfil ; others, alienated by rebellion, in disorder and revolt.

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[1] Mark i. 23-27; Luke iv. 33-37.

Souls form a connecting link between the physical universe and the spiritual universe, for on the one hand they animate matter, and on the other they receive direct impulse from the Spirit. This intermediate region is the kingdom of man, he is the point of universal convergence.

Everything that is, finds an echo in him. The soul is under the influence of both matter and spirit ; it can unite with matter, which it transforms, organizes and vivifies, and from which it receives influence. It is at the same time open to the mysterious action of the Spirit, for the Spirit of God can descend upon it, can communicate his impulse, his truth, his charm ; and created spirits, good or evil, can contract with it secret affinities, according as it lets the good or the evil prevail within its conscience.

Just as bodies attracted by a common centre, which regulates and maintains their movements, form a system, a sort of family and world, so free spirits, under the influence of a common attraction, ally themselves to one another, and become as it were one mystic whole. The physical force which regulates matter is called attraction ; the force of attraction among spirits is love and will.

Every philosophy which loses sight of this vast uniformity mutilates our nature, misinterprets the drama of life, with the grandeur of the phenomena of which it is the stage, and its mighty destiny.

According to the teaching of Jesus, evil is not merely a human fact which has its origin in the evil will and in heredity, its occasion in the frailty of the flesh, its punishment in physical infirmities and troubles; it is a fact which transcends the limits of our species and which must be assigned to the spiritual world beyond. Evil, to which mankind is a prey, has its first cause in the instigations of the evil spirits; it is the result of that which is fulfilled in their invisible spheres.

Man not only has an earthly nature, enslaved by his passions, with an egoistical and vain-glorious will which tends to prefer himself to all else; he himself is a spirit of an inferior order, subject to the evil and wicked influences of spirits greater than himself.

Jesus and his apostles have clearly taught the existence of Satan and his legions, and their influence on man. Jesus speaks often of the Tempter. He calls him ὁ Διάβολος (the Calumniator), ὁ Πονηρός (the Evil One), ὁ Ἄρχων των δαιμονίων (the Chief of devils), ὁ Ἐχθρός (the Enemy), Βεελζεβοὺλ (Baal-Zebub, the name of the Philistine god which the Jews applied to the chief of devils), Σατᾶν or Σατανᾶς (Satan), and Ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τοῦτου (Master of this world). We find allusions to him in the Sermon on the Mount,[1] in the Lord's Prayer,[2] in the Parables,[3] in his discussions with the Pharisees.[4] He is the strong man armed, whom Jesus comes to bind and to overcome. To him he attributes all great crimes, the incredulity of the Jews, the treachery of Judas, the blindness of the Gentiles, cruel maladies, demoniac possessions, and besetting sins.

The existence of evil spirits and their interference in the course of human events is everywhere accepted as a traditional truth, in all the primitive races, Semitic, Aryan, and Turanian, and in all states of their civilization. It is handed down to us from our fathers; it is implanted in the mind of man.

It is an act of levity and naive presumption to merely see

[1] Matt. v. 37.
[2] Matt. vi. 13.
[3] Matt. xiii. 19.
[4] Matt. xii. 24.

in this belief the product of ignorance or folly, of imposture or credulity. Ranged in opposition to this universal testimony which comprises the whole of mankind ; all its religions, all its philosophies, all its traditions, and all its doctrines, the greatest names in poetry, in science, and in religion ; we find only three sects : among the heathen, the Epicureans and the Cynics ; among the Jews, the Sadducees. To them are allied the materialist critic, the modern pantheist, and their philosophy, which whilst recognising a personal God, has isolated him from this world, discussing the evolution of mankind under the influence of physical forces, as if God did not exist ; an Euphemistic Atheism which reassures simple souls by avoiding brutal negations, but which leads to the same result as the most glaring scepticism or atheism.

This last negation, which only dates from a century and a half ago, does not rest on any serious foundation. It was the outcome of audacious assertions, gratifying to our secret horror of the invisible world and to our scorn for the witness of others. Has it ever been proved that spirits do not exist? and if they exist, that they do not intervene in the world by our feelings, our inclinations, our imaginations, our passions, our dreams?

Science without God, materialist and pantheist, has boldly declared that the supernatural phenomena with which history abounds ; charms, divinations, enchantments, the calling up of spirits, fascination, witchcraft, sorcery, demoniac possessions, are nothing more than the frenzy of ignorance, of imagination, of nervous disorders, hysteria, somnambulism, or natural magnetism ;[1] but science has never proved it.

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[1] "Plato taught that one must recognize a world of invisible spirits between God and man. They maintain the harmony of the two spheres. They are the tie which binds together the universe. It is through them that all science of divination proceeds, all priestcraft relative to sacrifices, initiations, enchantments, prophecies, magic. For God does not manifest himself directly to man, but through the medium of spirits. He who is learned in all these things is indeed an inspired man." (Plato, *Symposium.*)

No nervous affection can account for bodies suspended in the air in violation of the law of gravity, nor the sight of hidden things, nor the prediction of future events, nor the knowledge of strange tongues without having learnt them. No negative assertion can stand against these facts. They exist, authenticated, patent; and they set at defiance the science which refuses to recognise the intervention of intelligent beings, superior to man.

Charlatanry, credulity, and superstition have certainly played a great part in these phenomena, but even if we grant that this part is as large as any intelligent critic could demand, there still remain undeniable facts which cannot be explained by these causes, and which can only be challenged by those whose minds are no longer open to conviction. This spirit of negation, destructive as it is in spite of its tranquil exterior, ill conceals the timidity of those who use it so freely.

The history of paganism is merely a dismal manifestation of the works of Satan. The errors and the darkness which have led the mind of man astray and sullied his conscience, the terrible vices which devour whole civilisations, the passions which make man of the earth earthly, and immure him in this land of sorrow and death, are a sign of the incessant activity of the evil spirit, the prince of this world; from him and all his legions arise degrading, voluptuous, and homicidal forms of worship, which are the cause of pagan decrepitude.

The mysterious tempter, after having enticed the first human couple to revolt, continues his work through the ages, and this work of homicide and self-seeking, of pride and voluptuousness, of violence and craft, of servitude and death, grows and covers the earth, drawing the multitude of the nations, civilisations, and races within its fatal circle. It is like a deluge, but where shall we look for the ark?

To deliver mankind it is not enough to communicate a healing force which shall calm our passions, revive and purify our will; we must be armed and freed, armed to withstand the wiles of the Evil One, and freed from the yoke with which he oppresses us. Where are we to look for such a force?

It is, indeed, in the power of every intelligent and free being to influence by his spoken word, and during his whole life to impress on those who come in contact with him the impulse of his spirit: this is the greatest gift and the highest power which has been bestowed upon the creature; but what is this spirit? It is a finite energy, a light mixed with darkness, a weak and bounded will, with unruly and disordered passions. Hence the inability of man to regenerate man; in communicating his spirit, he transmits the evil with which he is himself infected.

The Spirit of God, alone, being above and beyond all evil, can work the redemption of man; this Spirit existed in all its fulness in Jesus, and Jesus was the true, the only Saviour.

This was one of the functions most eagerly looked for in the Messiah. Prejudices, indeed, had diminished and restricted it, as they had weakened and disfigured the Messianic ideal. In this work, men thought, only the chosen nation was concerned. It was a question for the Jew, not for mankind, for the people rather than the individual. Such was the exclusiveness of this extraordinary race, that all the rest of mankind vanished before it, and the individual himself seemed absorbed by the superior unity of the nation. The Messiah's words of salvation and deliverance had no meaning for them except from the point of view of their national and religious autonomy. An independent and victorious nation, a free, respected, and universally recognized worship, was all they looked for.

Nothing was further from the thought of Jesus. Though sent primarily to the Jews, he knew himself to be the Saviour of mankind. It was mankind and not the Jews alone whom he would save and render free; and even when revealing himself to the Jews, it was to the man that he spoke, to the free and conscious being, to the individual, to the soul, to that which makes all men equal in the sight of God. In this lies his greatness and his universality.

The work of the salvation of man therefore implies two elements: the one negative, his emancipation from the tyranny of the spirit of evil, whose ordinary manifestations and instruments are to be found in that world given up to its rule; in our weakened and misdirected will, and in our unbridled passions; the other positive, the effective communication of the Spirit of God or of good. In penetrating his being, to the very depth of his soul, this Spirit enlightens him and draws him on, strengthens his will, refines his nature, and brings the whole man into the way of truth and virtue, into the peace and order of a well-regulated life.

Though imprisoned for a time in the body which must suffer and die, it will one day reveal itself, when we shall appear immortal, transfigured, glorified, absorbed, but not confounded, in the life of God himself, in his light, his love, and his beauty

This function of a deliverer and a Saviour, in the deepest, the most spiritual, the most mystic sense of the word, was not fully grasped, and was naturally neglected by those historians who have wished to interpret the life of Jesus, by distorting the sacred writings to suit materialist, pantheist, sceptic, and rationalist criticism.

The demoniacs healed by Jesus, the devils, and the chief of the devils, Satan, who plays an important part in the life of Christ, which cannot be suppressed without misrepresentation, have been the subject of great critical discussions. The Gospel is full of things which baffle the understanding, startle it, and at times provoke it. The incidents concerning devils are not the most startling of these, but they embarrass a certain modern philosophy which regards the belief in a devil as a vain superstition, and men possessed by evil spirits merely as victims of physical disease; and since Jesus believed in devils and cast them out of bodies possessed by them, recent critics have not hesitated to accuse him of having shared the superstitions of his time and country. He believed, they say, that he cast out the devils by which poor mad people thought themselves tormented; all that he did was to soothe them.

This conclusion applied to one who never tolerated nor accepted the false ideas which misled opinion, is most unworthy; it is an arbitrary theory besides. For philosophy has never proved that spirits do not exist, and science has never established that demoniac possession was merely mental alienation. Before accusing Christ of superstition, it would be necessary to demonstrate that the devils, whose existence he admitted and which he exorcised, were nothing but a dream of Jewish imagination.

The cool and occasionally insulting assertion of a few critics in the face of universal belief, may be passed over with contempt.

Some, wishing to save Christ's character for wisdom, for the theory which denies the existence of devils is fatal to it, have devised a system of accommodation. Jesus, they assert, did not believe in Satan nor in his host of evil angels; if he spoke of them and appeared to cast them out, it was merely to accommodate himself to the ideas and the language of the people. Ill-conceived expedient; which sacrifices the uprightness, the simplicity, the loyalty of his character, to preserve intact his reputation for wisdom. Nothing could be in more violent disagreement with the whole spirit of his teaching. It would be impossible to misunderstand, to depreciate, to disparage, to misrepresent, any phenomena of far-reaching import more effectively.

To deny the existence of the devil is to deny the superhuman origin of evil; to deny his constant intervention in human affairs is to deny the most powerful cause of our corruption ; to deny demoniac possession is to deny the most violent manifestation of the Tempter by whom we are enslaved ; to deny the cure of those whose very movements and bodily faculties were under the dominion of the Evil One, is to deny one of the divine powers of Christ.

These are fatal errors ; they lead to the denial of Jesus and his Messianic work.

When we search closely the minds of the saints, when we trace out the lives of those heroic souls who have followed in the path of Christ, and inherited his spirit, we see them in constant warfare, not only with their natural and selfish instincts but with the evil spirits, by whose furious attacks, though they cannot be subdued, they never cease to be tormented.

The mass of mankind are only familiar with the works of Satan. The spirit of evil, to seduce them, has only to let loose the tempests of passion, the seductions of selfishness, and the whirlwinds of ambitious pride ; it is reserved for the saints to wrestle, in imitation of Jesus, with the dark powers of evil, those wicked spiritual forces[1] to whom the world has been in bondage since the beginning.

Here we have the whole of a higher psychology which is the living commentary of the Gospel, and which is beyond the power of obtuse criticism to understand. This domain is closed to it ; let it deny the existence of this domain, its denials are of no value ; the saints of God live, history is full of them, and to them we must look if we would discern those things which the limited science of the rational man does not even suspect. All systems of atheism and fatalism falsify or destroy the true idea of evil ; and hence they are powerless to understand him who spoke of himself as without sin and alone capable of overcoming evil. Whoever submits to them no longer feels the overwhelming pity for man burdened with his sins, he hears no more the loud groans which issue from the panting breast of mankind, he hopes no more for universal redemption. The soul of the Redeemer remains impenetrable for him. He will willingly adopt in his life, the teachings and the moral precepts of Christ, that is all he can attain to; that by which moralists may resemble him from afar off, but not that by which Jesus has separated himself from all other teachers and dominates them all. To give wise precepts is in the power of the wise man; to command spirits is beyond his province, but it is by this means only that man can be saved and made free. Jesus has this power; he exalts the soul, his word drives away the evil spirit which tyrannizes over it, it vanquishes its evil suggestions, repulses its assaults, and gives to the believer the light and strength which draw his will into that of God.

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[1] Ephes. vi. 12.

These are the facts to which the Gospel bears witness. To neglect them is to take from Jesus his most characteristic feature, and to bring him down to the level of the mere philosophers of Greece and Rome, or the Jewish rabbis. A hasty glance at the beliefs of the Jews of the first century with regard to evil spirits and the superstitious practices of their exorcists is enough to make us reject such an offence to his greatness, and to enable us to estimate how far he was in advance of his age, in this point as in all others.

The existence of spirits, angels and devils; beings superior to man, and intermediate between God and him; is one of the ideas familiar to the Jewish religion. It has been supposed that this doctrine originated in Chaldaea and Persia, and that it dated from the Babylonian captivity.

History proves the falseness of this assertion, for angels are mentioned in the most ancient of the sacred writings of the Israelites. An angel comforted Hagar in the desert;[1] an angel destroyed Sodom and saved Lot;[2] and Jacob, when he was asleep, saw angels ascending and descending the mysterious ladder.[1] Most of the books which follow Genesis are full of analogous passages, which refer to these spirits above the earth, and to their numberless legions.

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[1] Gen. xvi. 7.

[2] Gen. xix.

Whatever development it may have received in the course of history, the faith of the ancients remained pure; belief in spirits never suffered any injury, and the primitive dogma, whilst covering itself with a poetic veil of popular superstitions, never transformed itself into legend or fable. The books written before the captivity often and in many ways, represent angels in the most glowing poetic colours: such as the cherubim with the flaming sword, who guarded the entrance of Paradise;[2] the host of heaven, which in the vision of Micaiah surrounded the throne of God;[3] Satan, who presented himself when the sons of God took counsel and who discussed with Jehovah the temptation of Job.[4]

The belief in devils, angels, and spirits was common among the Jews. The Sadducees alone did not share it; they were the Epicureans of this people. Not only was the existence of devils admitted, but their influence and intervention in life was believed in. Many illnesses and infirmities were attributed to them. They were called evil or unclean spirits, the latter name being reserved for those devils who led their victims to the tombs and unclean places.[5] It was said of certain men that they had an evil or unclean spirit.

Demoniac possession should not be confused with any physical malady. It is not an organic or bodily disorder, a kind of hallucination or mental alienation, or one of the nervous affections, as rationalist critics have pretended in defiance of the sacred writings which refer to it; it is a particular condition of the mind, a psychological disorder. The presence of a devil in certain men neither absorbs nor yet destroys their personality. The individuality is indestructible and inviolable. God himself, who could destroy everything, as he has created everything, destroys nothing and does not allow destruction. The most violent satanic action only affects the organic and lower faculties, the imagination and the senses of the unfortunate victims; their freewill may be enchained for a moment, but it only belongs to the devil when voluntarily surrendered. The man possessed of a devil is under the dominion of a spirit which tyrannises over him, suspends or fetters his liberty, deprives him of the normal control of his body and limbs, speaks by his mouth and deranges his feelings. The abnormal state of his faculties is not due to an unhealthy condition of the brain or to organic disturbances; it is born of the violent and disturbing action of a superior will; it is a result and not a cause. Hence, the healing of one possessed is beyond the power of medicine; it can only be effected by the moral influence of one spirit on another.

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[1] Gen. xxviii. 12.

[2] Gen. iii. 24.

[3] I. Kings xxii. 19.

[4] Job i. 6.

[5] *Talmud Hieros.*, *Errubin*, fol. 42, 2.

It is true that actual illness, as a rule, accompanied demoniac possession.[1] Certain senses were often paralysed; the man possessed of a devil could not see, could not speak; he was subject to convulsions or epileptic fits:[2] but we have no authority to confound these maladies with the possession itself. All that one can say after the closest examination of the texts, is that the mischief introduced into the organic life of the victim may have been originated by the violent action of the spirit which tormented him: so intimate is the connection between mind and body, that organic disturbances lead to mental troubles, just as mental troubles engender organic disorders.

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[1] Matt. ix. 32; cf. Mark ix. 17-25, Matt. xii. 22.

[2] Matt. xvii. 14.

Superstition and magic have played their part in these beliefs; they have always exercised a great influence among the Jews. They attached much importance to dreams, which they provoked by art, and they had a science for their interpretation, which was considered one of the noblest. Indeed, certain men made a profession of this science; there were, according to the Talmud of Babylon,[1] twenty-four interpreters at Jerusalem. Perhaps no other people have ever held amulets, magical formulae, exorcisms, and incantations in such high esteem. Those who were ill wore amulets hung round their necks, and they had various magical formulae recited to allay their pains and to send them to sleep. Of such formulae there were many kinds, according to the disease; some were a protection against mad dogs, others against the demon of blindness. They practised witchcraft, sorcery, and the art of divination. They required of each member of the Sanhedrin that he should be versed in astrology, divination, and magic, so that he could judge in these matters; they recounted a vast number of wonders worked by their magicians, and, in spite of the exaggeration which always enters into recitals of the marvellous, it is difficult not to see a glimmer of truth in this mass of testimony.

Exorcism, properly so called, was held in repute. The most pious rabbis took upon themselves to cast out devils, and some attained great celebrity.

Their most common prayer was an incantation, of which several formulae are preserved in the Talmud.[2] Before pronouncing it, the rabbi had to pour a little oil on the head of the sick person. There was even, according to Josephus,[3] a book on magic, the "Sepher Refuot," and tradition ascribes its composition to Solomon himself. One of the most efficacious talismans, the historian tells us, was a sacred root called

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[1] Beracoth, fol. 55, 2.

[2] Sabbat, col. 6, 2; Talm. Babyl. Iema, fol. 84; Avodat Zarah fol. 12.

[3] *Ant.* viii. 2.

"baaras." It was of the colour of fire and difficult to find, but the touch of it was always efficacious: the devil could never resist it. Exorcisms were frequent, as were cases of demoniac possession.

We have no evidence to enable us to decide by what signs a demoniac could be recognized in those times; nor why there was such an increase in the number of those possessed in Palestine in the time of Jesus, and why they disappeared or diminished afterwards. These are still more mysterious questions. The excitement of mind, the state of exasperation of the people, who saw their independence at an end, the extreme tension of their religious hopes at this crisis in their history, when their strongest passions were aflame, are, no doubt, the material and psychological conditions; but the true causes are beyond us; to grasp them it would be necessary to know the laws which bind together the mental and spiritual worlds, and to penetrate the very purposes of God.

When the Spirit of God manifests himself in the earth in any part of the human race, the spirit of evil rises in revolt and multiplies its attacks, in order to impede his action. It is a law of history, that the most holy among men, in waging war with evil, indirectly call forth the most violent manifestations of evil. The advent of Jesus was the advent of the Holy One of God, the personal intervention of the Spirit in his divine fulness; and it was natural that it should excite the most terrible attacks of the spirit of evil and his legions.

It is worthy of note, indeed, that all those demoniacs, whose miraculous cure is recorded in the Gospels, were drawn to Jesus by an irresistible force. The spirit which spoke by their mouth never failed to proclaim the Messianic character of him whose sovereign power they dreaded. This was one method of opposing the Prophet, for by calling Jesus the Holy

One of God, the Son of David, and lastly the Messiah, they aroused in the minds of the crowd those false ideas which attached to this title, and we know that nothing would be better calculated to impede the work of the true Messiah. Jesus commanded these unworthy voices to be silent, not so much because their hypocritical and perfidious testimony repelled him, as because he knew that reserve and caution were necessary to his work. He, the sovereign master of spirits, exorcises them; master of the soul, he transforms it; master of the body, he restores its balance and health; he only heals the body to save the soul; he only saves the soul by freeing it from the Evil One, and he only sets it free by communicating to it the Spirit of God. The cure of those possessed is only a particular case of the healing power of Jesus, one of the phenomena which most fully symbolize his great work of deliverance.

That which struck the Jews of the synagogue of Capernaum with astonishment in the healing of the demoniac, was not so much the fact itself, as the way in which it was performed. Such cures, it seems, were not unknown to them, but they were due to the virtue of the prayers, sacred formulae, incantations, and invocations of their exorcists, and, probably, more often to the accommodation of the spirits themselves.

Jesus did not appeal to any extraneous force, he only had to speak one word; he commanded, and the unclean spirit passed out subdued ejected by a superior will.

His fame went out into all the country; the towns of the lake and of the mountain were roused to excitement by the report of the event.

Jesus left the synagogue accompanied by his four disciples, and came to the house of Simon and Andrew, which was near at hand. Peter's mother-in-law was in bed, sick of a fever. His disciples besought him for her; he drew near, lifted her up, and took her by the hand; immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.[1]

The event of the morning had stirred all the little town. In the evening, when the sun was set, and the Sabbath day was ended, they brought to him all that were diseased and those that were possessed with devils. All the city was gathered together at the door, and Jesus healed many by laying on of hands, and he again cast out many devils who cried out, "Thou art the Son of God"; and he rebuked them and would not suffer them to say that he was the Christ.

And in the morning he arose up very early and went out alone to pray in a solitary place. Peter and they that were with him followed him afar off, and the crowd came again to seek him. His disciples having joined him, said: "Master, all men seek for thee.

"And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth."

This story, so full of life and yet so soberly and simply told by the two Evangelists,[2] whose words I borrow, gives us a true picture of one day's life of Jesus in Galilee. It enables us to witness the apostolic work of the Master from hour to hour; we can follow him from morning till evening and see him work and live.

Prayer was his first act. Before sunrise, when all were asleep, he left his house and the town and retired to a lonely spot, far from noise and far from men, seeking silence and solitude to speak in secret with his Father.

The scenery of Palestine is favourable to meditation. The villages and towns are noisy, but the country is silent; when we leave the houses behind us we find at once the calm of the desert. There is no confused noise like the noise of the sea, or the sounds which are heard in woods. Some unheeded cries there are: the warbling of birds, the neighing of animals, the barking of dogs, and the crowing of the cock; and, in the night, the howling of jackals, and occasionally the call of human voices. But all these sounds are distinct and isolated, and lose themselves in the silence which pervades the valleys and mountains of Palestine, and add to its great melancholy.

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[1] Matt. viii. 14-17; Mark i. 29-39; Luke iv. 38-44.

[2] Mark i. 29-39; cf. Matt. viii. 14-17; Luke iv. 42-44.

When the disciples joined their Master, they found him in prayer. Then the work of the day began; they went into the villages and into the synagogues at the hour of meeting, and Jesus preached the Kingdom of God and thrilled the crowd which was gathered together to hear him.

The house where he was receiving hospitality was soon invaded. All those who were sick were led to the Prophet, and he healed them with a word, with a look, or by putting his hands upon them. The numbers of those who thronged him were so great that he had not time to eat.

Sometimes he returned to the borders of the lake on either side of the town, and entered into one of Peter's ships. The crowd sat along the shore in silence, and he spoke to them from the ship, which was pushed off a little from the land.

At sunset he went again to his dwelling, and even till night-time he was again besieged by the people. The halt and the blind, the deaf and dumb, the mad, the epileptics those who were possessed of devils, and those who were sick of divers diseases flocked to him. Never has anyone found himself surrounded by a greater number of those in trouble. No one has ever healed more, nor felt more keenly the joy of doing good. His goodness and his compassion were inexhaustible; he often said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."[1]

His days bent under the weight of good works, as a tree laden with ripe fruit. Many asked him to their houses to do him honour and to hear him close at hand. His conversation was always earnest and was full of vivid images and unexpected touches. Truthful souls felt themselves transformed by his voice; treachery was unmasked and confounded.

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[1] Acts xx. 35.

At night-time, when all retired to sleep, he still watched for many hours, and sometimes spent the whole night in prayer. The labours of his apostolic work gave him life; his body, as his soul, rested on the breast of the Heavenly Father.

Such was the life of Jesus during these days in Galilee, which were as the springtime of the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER III.

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER. OPPOSITION BY THE PHARISEES IN GALILEE.

THE journey of Jesus in the neighbourhood of Capernaum was of short duration.[1] Some days afterwards we find him again in the town. His activity was very great; within seven months from this time he had preached the Gospel throughout all Galilee and Decapolis, and had gone even to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and into the gates of Caesarea Philippi. During this first journey, he certainly visited Chorazin and Bethsaida.

Bethsaida, a simple fishing village, was the home of Peter. It was situated on the shore of the lake, at the north-west point, near a little bay at the entrance of the plain of Gennesaret, and had an excellent anchorage sheltered from the south winds. A beautiful spring, the Ain-Tine, gushed forth at its gates. The road from the Mediterranean to Damascus traversed the village, and then branched out in two directions. One of the roads skirted the lake, and led, in three-quarters of an hour, to Capernaum; the other lost itself in the gorges of the mountains of Safed. There is still an old khan at the point of bifurcation, which was built at the entrance of the defiles where attack was easy, to protect the caravans from brigands. Of the ancient Bethsaida, shapeless ruins only remain, with a wall of imperishable mortar still standing here and there.

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[1] Mark ii. 1.

The plough has passed through the midst of these ruins, among stones which the lazy fellah does not even dream of removing. Chorazin was to the north of Capernaum, two miles distant from the town and lake, overlooking a wady at the bottom of which a rapid torrent roars in the rainy season. At the present day, all the hills are bare of trees. Blocks of basalt appear on all sides, and give to the country the gloomy aspect peculiar to a volcanic soil. These rocks obscure the view, except at one point, where, owing to a dip in the rocks, a corner of the blue lake is visible; a gleam of brightness in a district under the ban of nature.

The ruins of the town destroyed fifteen or sixteen centuries ago lie in chaotic confusion. Chorazin must have been a garrison town, to judge by the ruins of a tower which appears to have been a fortress; it had also a synagogue, the remains of which are still remarkable and give some idea of its fine proportions. Lintels fallen to the ground, blocks hollowed in the form of marine shells, fragments and capitals of columns, and monolith piers, all of basalt, lie heaped in wild confusion. This is evidently the place where Jesus often preached.

Some steps further, an old tree, a dôum, with its tufted branches, capable of sheltering an entire tribe, contrasts its vigorous vitality with the death all around. Flowers flourish in the midst of the ruins; grass, manured by the flocks, grows luxuriantly; a few Bedouins encamp in the town once denounced by Christ, and a spirit of desolation rests upon it.

Only one fact is told us of all this journey in the villages bordering upon Capernaum, and this one is no doubt recorded because it helped to spread abroad the fame of Jesus, and because it forcibly struck the imagination of the crowd. This act was the cleansing of a leper.

Leprosy was one of the diseases most feared by the Jews, for they regarded it as a direct visitation of God,[1] and in their curses they desired it only for their worst enemies.[2]

At the outset of the disease, the priest declared the leper unclean, excluded him from all contact with his fellows, and banished him from the town in the company of other lepers.[3] His clothes were rent in sign of grief. The solitude to which he was condemned was not, however, a prison ;[4] he could enter the synagogues of those towns which were not surrounded by walls, but he was placed behind a rail, which isolated him from the congregation ; he was the first to enter and the last to leave.[5]

Leprosy was considered incurable, even the white leprosy, which was the most common form and the least repulsive. When it had spread over the whole body, and the scales had fallen off, and the skin had become white and shining, it was no longer regarded as contagious : the priests could then declare the leper "clean" and restore him to liberty.[6]

He was bound to offer three sacrifices, one for atonement, the second as a sin offering, and the third as a burnt offering. The poor offered doves ; the rich, lambs. The ceremony was performed in one of the halls of the Temple at the north corner of the Court of the Women. The leper, conducted in front of the gate of Nicanor, the threshold of which he was not allowed to cross, stretched first his head, then his hand, and then his foot towards the Men's Court. The sacrificing priest touched the lobe of his ear, his thumb, and toe with blood, whilst another priest anointed him with oil : he departed cleansed.

This scourge, endemic in Egypt and the south of Asia

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[1] Numbers xii. 10; II. Chronicles xxvi. 19.

[2] II. Sam. iii. 29; II. Kings v. 27.

[3] II. Kings vii. 3; Luke xvii. 12.

[4] Kelim, cap. i., ibid. 7.

[5] Negaim, xiii.; Hal., 12.

[6] Leviticus xiii., xiv.

Minor, has not altogether disappeared from Palestine: Jerusalem, Nablous, and Ramleh have still their lepers. They may be seen, as in the time of Jesus, on the outskirts of these towns; the skin of a shining white covered with scales, the ears and the nose eaten away by ulcers, the eyes fixed, glassy, and inflamed, the joints of the fingers hanging loose; stretching forth their hands covered with bandages towards the passers-by, asking alms and obtruding their misery with wailing cries.

It was one of these repulsive sufferers whom Jesus touched and healed. The Master, returning to Capernaum, descended the mountain,[1] followed by a multitude. He stopped on his way at a town where, when the evening had come and the multitude had withdrawn, a leper came to him, threw himself on his knees, his face to the ground, and besought him saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

He was moved with compassion: taking pity upon such faith bound to such misfortune; he stretched forth his hand and touched the leper: "I will," he said, "be thou clean."

As soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him. Jesus dismissed him then, saying in a tone of authority: "See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."

The evident nature of the malady, and the suddenness of the cure, wrought solely by touch and at the will of Jesus, gave to this deed a supernatural and miraculous character. Such acts were frequent, even habitual, during the public life of the Master.

The disease was considered incurable, but, if it had not been so, the instantaneous cure alone revealed in Jesus a divine power commensurate with his goodness. Above the Law, he, in spite of the Levitical prohibition,[1] touched the leper; such contact could not defile him, who with a word could wipe away all uncleanness. He did not content himself with healing the unhappy man who besought his help, but he made him a witness, his witness. Having charged him not to tell the multitude, whose excitability he both feared and sought to restrain, Jesus sent him to the priests, to Jerusalem, trying again from afar to open their eyes, and warning the Sanhedrin that he whom they had threatened with death as a blasphemer was continuing his work, and that the Spirit of God was with him.

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[1] Matt. viii. 1-4; Mark i. 40-45; Luke v. 12-16.

A man cured of leprosy was one of the greatest signs that a prophet could produce; it recalled Moses and Elisha,[2] one of whom had cured his sister Miriam, and the other Naaman the Syrian. Nothing could contain the transports of the leper's joy; he went forth and published everywhere all that had happened. Jesus could no longer show himself in the town; he was obliged to withdraw to a desert place, remote from human dwellings.

He found calm and prayed amid the solitudes.

The Messianic influence rapidly spread in Galilee, and throughout the whole of Palestine. Everything contributed to that result: the personal ascendency of Jesus, the novelty of his teaching, his wonder-working power, the eloquence of his speech, the renown of his works, his wide-reaching sympathy, and the over-excited state of the Galilaeans both in politics and religion. To all these causes we must add the frequency and closeness of the intercourse between all the towns and villages of the different tetrarchies and of Judaea with the metropolis.

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[1] Leviticus xiii.

[2] Numbers xi.; cf. Deuteronomy xxiv. 9.

The influence of the Temple and of the Sanhedrin resulted in the excessive centralization of power at Jerusalem. Religious observances, pilgrimages, and sacrifices, brought almost all Jewish families into Judaea and to Jerusalem many times in the year; the taxes imposed by the Temple necessitated a class of collectors, who travelled about the country; the doctrinal authority of the Sanhedrin extended over all the synagogues, and the members of that great assembly exercised everywhere a real inquisition.

Three distinct bodies formed themselves around Jesus: the disciples, the multitude, and the governing class of elders and doctors.

The disciples followed our Lord, living his life, and absorbing his teaching and goodness. They were the chosen soil which he worked upon and rendered fruitful. He loved them with a great personal regard, he spoke to them without metaphor, he initiated them little by little into his purposes, he penetrated them with his Spirit, and made them one body.

Crowds, whether in the East or West, are always the same: spontaneous, passive, and unable to resist the influence of novelty, of power, and above all, of good deeds wrought before their eyes. It was from these that Jesus sought and recruited his disciples, because among these he found simple hearts and upright souls. The people of Galilee, more independent of established powers, and more accessible to an influence which they regarded with suspicion, inspired him with more confidence than the people of Jerusalem. Jesus at once aroused their enthusiasm; he let them come to him, he had pity on their sufferings, and loaded them with benefits. He spoke to them in parables, from tenderness for their difficulty in understanding the divine truth, and so as not to expose the sacredness of his teaching to the misconstruction of the ignorant. He drew them in his footsteps to the synagogues, into the villages, across the fields to the shore of the lake and to the lonely hills. Seldom has a prophet called forth such enthusiasm; it was a divine attraction.

When a man stirs so powerfully a whole country, and strikes to the very heart of the people, opposition is never slow to appear.

We shall see it grow about Jesus in Galilee, as at Jerusalem; and naturally it arises in the upper class, the guardian of traditions, in that class which has power, and which represents the doctrines of the day. This opposition assumes all forms: aggressive and insidious, it flatters and intimidates, it lies in wait to spy and to surprise, it attaches itself to him whom it would ruin, and grows with his growth; it can let loose the passions, it knows how to use hypocrisy and hatred; it shrinks from nothing that can injure, and it was to pursue Jesus even unto death.

Whoever introduces new ideas, forms, and forces, has to contend against the old ideas, forms, and forces. Though man was born for progress, he refuses progress, and every innovation has a difficult birth. Jesus, the only divine innovator, was the holiest of victims. To try to improve mankind is to court persecution. Before renouncing a state, even an inferior one, and the interests which belong to it, man will often resist even to bloodshed; and he will try to destroy him who would rouse him from his inaction.

Jesus, prudent and reserved, full of firmness and force, sometimes sorrowful and indignant, was now to strive without ceasing against the Pharisees, to refute them, confound them, and overwhelm them with denunciations.

The Gospel narrative brings out vividly this antagonism and the various circumstances which from day to day embittered and intensified it.

As soon as Jesus had returned to Capernaum,[1] he was assailed by the people. His absence had increased rather than lessened the general excitement. The report of his return spread rapidly, and as soon as it was known that he was in the house, the crowd assembled in such numbers that there was neither room in the house nor in the court in front.

Jesus sat in an upper chamber[2] and preached the word. Near him were Pharisees and doctors of the Law, attracted by his growing fame. They were not all from Galilee, for some had come from Judaea, and even from Jerusalem; they listened rather to judge than to learn. The power of God was suddenly made manifest through an unforeseen incident.[3]

Whilst Jesus was speaking, some men brought one sick of the palsy to lay before him. On seeing how the crowd pressed, and not knowing how to bring him in, they mounted the outer staircase, went upon the house-top, uncovered the roof above the place where Jesus was, and through the opening thus made they let down the bed on which the man with the palsy lay. The energy of their fearless faith touched him: "Son," said he unto the sick of the palsy, "thy sins be forgiven thee." The Scribes and Pharisees were astounded at these unheard-of words, but it was with horror and not with wonder. They held their peace, but their silence could not conceal the anger of their hearts. This is blasphemy, they said to themselves. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Jesus, who read their hearts as an open book, knew their anxious thoughts. To justify in their eyes his words, the most remarkable, indeed, which ever fell from human lips, and which implied in him who dared to use them the very personality of God, he appealed to his calling, to his Messianic dignity, which it pleased him often to designate by the expression "Son of Man."[1] To forgive sins is an act of divine power. If Jesus assumed this right it was because God was in him, because he was equal to God.

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[1] Mark ii.

[2] A Jewish house consisted usually of a ground floor and an upper storey. On this upper storey was the "upper chamber," or *coenaculum.* There they retired to pray, and to consider holy things, religion, and law.

[3] Matt. ix. 2-8; Mark ii. 2-12; Luke v. 17-26.

Far from rejecting this conclusion as a blasphemy, he proved it by a miracle. "What reason ye in your hearts?" he said, in watching the Scribes and Pharisees. "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk?"

His questioners, rebuked, held their peace. "Ye must know," said he, "that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins"; and, turning towards the sick of the palsy, he said, "I say unto thee, arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house." At these words he rose up before them, took up the bed on which he was lying, and departed glorifying God.

There was a movement of fear in the crowd, as usually happens at the sight of something marvellous.

The cry of praise to God arose at once: "We never saw it on this fashion," said the bystanders. The healing of the sick of the palsy made a greater impression on their minds than did the divinity of Jesus, of which it was a striking manifestation. Jesus was for the crowd, and probably for the educated, to whom it was given to see his power, merely a worker of miracles, a prophet; and even after this the Pharisees remained hostile.

He went forth,[2] and passed by the shores of the lake, followed by the crowd, whom he taught as he went. But, as he was passing the receipt of custom, he saw sitting there one of the tax-gatherers, a publican, named Levi, the son of Alphaeus. "Follow me," he said to him.

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[1] This epithet, which Jesus adopted, did not give rise in the thoughts of his hearers to those errors which the name of Messiah always excited. It only implies his human origin, it means that in this descent he is the offspring promised to Adam, and that his supreme function, wholly spiritual, limits itself to bruising the head of the tempter, and thus setting mankind free from the tyranny of evil (Gen. iii. 15).

[2] Matt. ix. 9; Mark ii. 13; Luke v. 27.

This was enough. His word, which had just cleansed the leper, restored the power of movement to the sick of the palsy, and remitted sins, suddenly transformed a publican into a disciple ; the tax-gatherer rose, and, leaving all, followed Jesus.

With the four fishermen, there was now with Jesus a tax-gatherer, one of a class greatly despised among the Jews. The new disciple, a short time after, made a great feast in his house[1] for his Master, and invited his colleagues and friends ; so Jesus found himself among publicans and those whom the Pharisees called sinners. A certain number of these were already his followers.[2]

It was by this class, which was looked upon as sinful and unclean, that the good news of the Kingdom of God was most readily received. Jesus loved it.

For him, the distinction of rich and poor, of educated and ignorant, of pure and impure, of schools and parties, does not exist. In his eyes all differences are obscured by the uniformity of common needs, by the discipline of common duties, and by the dignity of a common vocation. He recognizes only two sorts of men : those who respond to God's call, and those who are deaf to it ; those who believe in his word, and those who reject it ; those who walk in the narrow way, and those who wander in the broad road that leads to destruction.

What he was to the little country of Galilee in those distant times, he is now, and always will be, to the whole world, to which his word still goes forth, and which he pervades with his Spirit. Herein lies the secret of the true equality which overcomes the necessary and inevitable inequalities of this world.

In this Kingdom, open to all, if there still remain privilege, it is in favour of the poor, the sick, the sinners, the humble, the weak, for these have one advantage over others; their misery. It makes them more ready to listen to Christ. It is easier, for his sake, to leave a custom-house or fishing-nets than to renounce a kingdom.

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[1] Matt. ix. 9; Mark ii. 14; Luke v. 27.

[2] Mark ii. 15.

The simple, who know their own ignorance, will listen more readily to the word of the Master than the wise, who are puffed up with their learning, and who believe themselves infallible; the sinner strikes his breast and acknowledges his own unworthiness, whilst the Pharisee is angered by the reproofs of his vain and trivial observances.

The followers of Jesus in Galilee gave scandal to the Scribes and Pharisees. Rigid and inexorable, they did not associate with people who were without religious observances, and whose very contact defiled them; they looked upon themselves as pure, and they religiously shunned all others.

Some of their number, when they saw Jesus eating with publicans and sinners, could not in their indignant zeal refrain from protesting against this practice. Perhaps these were not the most hostile to Jesus, and they may even have regarded him as a prophet who inspired them with a measure of admiration and fear. Indeed, we see them mingling with the disciples of John, and timidly asking questions, not of Jesus himself, but of his disciples.

"Why," said they, "eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"

This question betrayed jealousy and spite that the Prophet should prefer the company of these poor, and, as they would have called them, irreligious, people to their own.

The Master, always on the watch, himself replied to the question addressed to his disciples:

"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."[1]

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[1] Hosea vi. 6.

Integrity is of more value than ceremonial, and goodness is better than a burnt-offering. Besides, said he, to explain his sympathy with sinners, and to rebuke these self-righteous ones whose pride displeased him, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

The whole spirit of the Gospel is in these words, in which he revealed himself as one "Sprung from on high and who has proceeded from the mercy of God."

The Pharisees and the disciples of John took advantage of Levi's feast to attack Jesus, and to disparage those who followed him. We fast, said they, in their self-satisfaction, we fast often and make many prayers, whilst your disciples eat and drink.

The spirit of this misconceived religion, which had long since perverted the piety of the Jews, showed itself in this reproach of the Pharisees. Fasting was frequent among them; the least zealous fasted twice a week, and the others more often, and for the most futile motives. True repentance was quite foreign to these fasters, who often had no other object than to obtain by dint of abstinence self-complacency, good fortune, and success in their worldly affairs.[1]

"Leave them alone," Jesus said in answer; "they are the children of the bridechamber."

This expression was used by John himself, and it would strike home to the disciples of the Baptist. "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" Now is the marriage feast, but wait: "the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

"No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."

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[1] *Talmud Hierosol. in Meġillah*, fol. 75, 1; *Kilaim*, fol. 32-3.

The observances of the law, all the Mosaic ceremonies, are what Jesus meant by the old garment and the old bottles; the Spirit with which he abounds, the doctrine which he teaches, are the new cloth and the new wine. The old Law is past, it will be transformed; it cannot contain the Law of the Gospel; man enlarged by the Spirit needs a wider garment. We see the dawn of the doctrine of the liberty of the children of God, of which St. Paul was to be the apostle.

The Pharisees did not grasp the whole purport of the Master's reply, for his words had a depth which escaped his immediate hearers. But they must have understood that Jesus placed himself above what they considered the coping-stone of their religion. Their narrow minds refused to admit the light; they hardened their hearts against it. Their antagonism was persistent, and grew in violence as new incidents occurred.

In spite of his preference for the people, Jesus offered himself to all, great and small, and to the Pharisees themselves, as soon as they called upon him.

He had hardly finished speaking[1] when a man named Jairus came towards him. He must have been a Pharisee of some importance at Capernaum, for he was one of the chief rulers of the synagogue. A great misfortune had befallen him; his daughter, twelve years of age, was dying. The trial was stronger than his prejudices; he fell at Jesus' feet and besought him earnestly: Master, my daughter is dying; come to my house and lay thy hands upon her, that she may be healed and live. Jesus arose and followed him, accompanied by his disciples.

The multitude pressed close upon their footsteps. A

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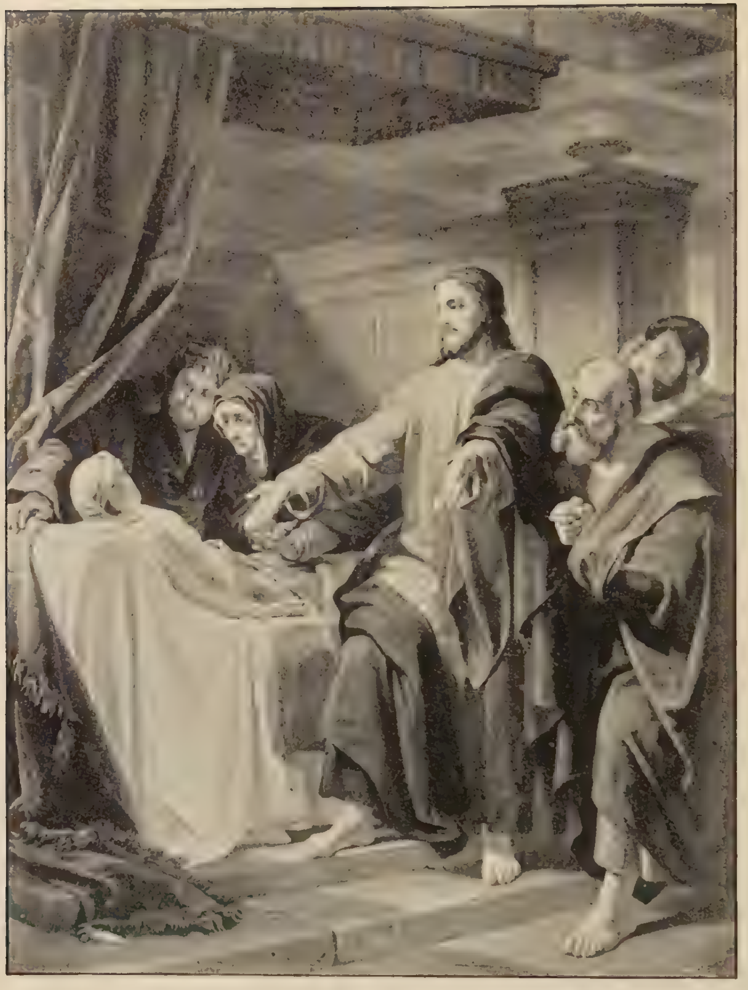
[1] Matt. ix. 18-34; Mark v. 21-43; Luke viii. 40-56.



CHRIST RAISING THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS.

From the Painting by Gustav Richter.

woman who for twelve years had been afflicted with an issue of blood, and had spent all her substance on physicians, without any being able to heal her, heard of the Prophet and joined the multitude behind him, convinced that if she could but touch the hem of his garment she would be healed. She touched it, and felt herself healed from that very moment. Jesus, knowing that virtue had gone out of him, turned towards the multitude, and asked who had touched his garments.

"The multitude throng thee," said his disciples to him, "and dost thou ask, who touched me?" He looked round about. The poor woman, trembling, and knowing what was done in her, fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

"Daughter," said Jesus to her, "thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

While he was speaking, word was brought to the ruler of the synagogue that his daughter was dead, and that it was useless to trouble the Master further. Jesus said to Jairus: "Be not afraid; only believe." Then he dismissed the multitude and his disciples themselves, and allowed no one to follow him, save Peter, James, and John.

When he was come to the house he saw a great tumult. The mourners, with dishevelled hair, were wailing and crying and raising their arms, and wringing their hands, and uttering cries, which mingled with the shrill notes of the flute-players.

Jesus entered and said to the people: "Why make ye this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." They laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. He sent them all away, and led the father and mother of the damsel with his three disciples into the room where she was lying. He took her by the hand, and said to her: "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise."

The damsel arose and walked, and Jesus commanded that something should be given her to eat. The parents were beside themselves with joy, but Jesus charged them to say nothing of what had passed.

As he went out from thence, he also healed two blind men who were brought to him.[1] "Believe ye," said he to them, "that I am able to do this?" "Yea, Lord."

Misfortune makes faith easy. Jesus touched their eyes, and added, "According to your faith be it unto you," and their eyes were opened. "See," said he, as he sent them away, "that no man know it." As they went out, a dumb man, possessed with a devil, was brought to him; he cast out the devil, and restored to the dumb man his speech.

All these miracles produced an irresistible effect on the multitude. The people, with growing admiration, and with genuine enthusiasm, cried out, "It was never so seen in Israel." But the Pharisees, who had witnessed all these miracles, and so could not deny them, misrepresented them by treating Jesus as a sorcerer, and saying, "He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils." This blasphemy, which as yet they put forward with fear, was afterwards cast in the teeth of Jesus. To no accusation could he be more sensitive; it drew from the indignation of his soul the most overwhelming denunciations that outraged love has ever thundered forth.

One or two days afterwards, on a Sabbath,[2] that Sabbath which is called the Second-First, that is, the first of the second year which followed the Sabbatical year,[3] Jesus was walking through the corn-fields; his disciples were with him, and as they were walking they plucked some ears of corn, and rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. This offended certain Pharisees, who were passing, for, as we have seen, their laws relating to the observance of the Sabbath were of great severity.

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[1] Matt. ix. 27-34.
[2] Matt. xii. 1-8; Mark ii. 23-28; Luke vi. 1-5.
[3] Cf. Wieseler; Chron. Synop., p. 225, 353; Hamburg, 1843.

"Why," said they, "do ye on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?"

Jesus replied: "Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungered, and they that were with him?[1] How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests. Do you accuse David and those that were with him? Do you accuse Ahimelech, the High Priest, who gave him the shewbread? Why then do you condemn the innocent?"

Necessity knows no law of ceremony; if it excuses some it also excuses others. You invoke your law which forbids all work; but "do not the priests in the temple sacrifice on the Sabbath day? and yet they are blameless." Know then that "the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Moreover, "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

Jesus avails himself of the smallest incidents to enlighten his adversaries and to elevate their minds; he calls them from the letter to the spirit of the Law, and from external ceremonies to upright conduct. He appears so much the more grand and true, as his opponents show themselves more narrow and petty and hollow.

In the face of his astonished adversaries, he asserts most emphatically his sovereign dignity and his Messianic claims. "Holy though the Sabbath be," he added as he dismissed them, "the Son of Man is Lord of it."

It is difficult to imagine anything which could more deeply offend the Pharisees than thus placing himself above the Sabbath, and at the same time above the Law, and above Moses.

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[1] I. Sam. xxi. 1.

This pretension, sacrilegious in their eyes, inflamed their hatred; they were condemned to hate him whom they did not wish to recognize, and whose signs they obstinately refused to accept. The foregoing events, drawn from the Gospel narrative, are alone fully sufficient to explain the antagonism which grew up and increased day by day among the Pharisees against the new prophet. They followed his footsteps; they watched him closely, and longed at all costs to compromise him.

The following Sabbath,[1] he entered into the synagogue to teach. There he found a man whose right hand was withered. The Pharisees and Scribes, seeing his infirmity, raised before Jesus the question of the observance of the Sabbath day. It was an insidious attempt to provoke him, and to find a pretext to accuse him.

With their miserable casuistry, the doctors of the Law, devoid of all pity, taught that it was not lawful to heal on the Sabbath day: they forbade the application of any remedy, whether of rubbing or anointing.[2] One of the axioms that found favour with this class, which was always mindful of its own interests, had modified the excessive strictness of the Law. "Act," say the wise men, "with mercy towards the goods of an Israelite."[3]

The rabbis, relying on this principle, permitted certain acts on the Sabbath day, to preserve an animal in peril. The lawyers asked Jesus: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" They knew his reply beforehand, but they wished to discredit him before the assembly, where their doctrine was held inviolable.

Jesus made use of their own teaching, to put them to confusion. "Who is there among you that having one sheep, if it fell into a pit on the Sabbath day, will not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much is a man then better than a sheep." Then he said to the man with the withered hand, "Arise, and stand up in the midst;" and he arose and stood up.

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[1] Matt. xii. 9; Mark iii. 1-6; Luke vi. 6-11.

[2] *Maimon. in Schabbat*, 6, 21.

[3] *Talmud Hierosol.*, *Ioma*, fol. 62, 11.

Jesus then said to the Pharisees, "Is it lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath day, to save life or to destroy it? answer me." They were silent. Jesus, sorrowing at their blindness, gazed on them with anger. "Stretch forth thy hand," said he to the sick man. He stretched it forth, and immediately his withered hand was restored whole.

Their minds were not enlightened by this miracle; it served only to put them to confusion, and their confusion turned to venom. Nothing can conquer the obstinacy which wilfully turns from the light: fanaticism is blind. The religious errors of the Jews in the time of Jesus make us smile, but they were for them the most perfect code of morality: it was sacrilege to touch it. The compassionate wisdom of Jesus, and his wonderful miracles, rather exasperated them than dissipated their prejudices.

After this scene, which so vividly pourtrays them, the Pharisees, more irritated than ever, met in council and considered how to destroy Jesus.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

WHILE the opposition of the educated classes and the rabbis took shape and gathered force, disciples flocked to Jesus in ever-increasing numbers. Many came to Capernaum, from Galilee and Peraea, from the towns of Decapolis and from Jerusalem, from Judaea and Idumaea, from Tyre and Sidon, from Phoenicia and from Syria. There was a general movement throughout the country. People did not wish merely to see and hear him, the sick thrust themselves upon him to touch him, and they were healed at his very touch; his power shone forth in good deeds.

He was obliged to hide himself, so much did the multitude throng him. In order to escape from them, he told his disciples to keep a boat always in readiness, when he was travelling along the lake.[1]

At the sight of the people his heart was moved with pity, for he saw that they were weary, and scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd. He compared them to a field of corn.

"The harvest truly is plenteous," said he to his disciples, "but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."[2]

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[1] Mark iii. 9.

[2] Matthew ix. 36-38.

During these days he went out to the mountains to find greater peace, and he spent a whole night on one of them in solitude.[1]

The name is not mentioned in the Gospels, but a very old tradition points to Djebel Koroun-Hattin.[2] It is a solitary height, about three hours' journey to the west of Capernaum. It rises above the wide tableland which traverses the highway from Acre to the Lake of Tiberias, and commands the entrance to the ravines of the Wady El-Haman. The two peaks, which crown it, and which have given it its name,[3] are separated by a narrow ridge.

Between their steep sides, which are covered with broken flints, lies a turf-grown valley, which seems designed to contain a multitude that one wishes to gather together and to isolate. They close the horizon on the north and south, so that the sky only can be seen. The summits are bathed in light, and all around lies the cultivated plain, one mass of verdure, or at the time of harvest an expanse of corn-fields, a sea in which Koroun-Hattin rises as a little island. On the north, the snow-clad Hermon towers majestically into the boundless sky. To the east, in the background, lie the lofty tablelands of Djaulon, the ancient land of Gilead, and the picturesque chain of Hauran, whose white crest appears like a delicate floating mist. In the foreground lies the lake of Gennesareth, whose waters assume every variety of tint, in response to the ever-changing light.

The hillsides are covered, in spring, with the same anemones, with the same asphodels; with the same lilies whose white array Jesus admired; and there still pass against the sky the same birds, gay and heedless, which the Heavenly Father feeds, though they neither sow, nor toil, nor reap.

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[1] Matt. v. 1; Luke vi. 12.

[2] Robinson, who seems to take pains to upset all local traditions, places the Mount of the Beatitudes in the heights which overlook the plain of Gennesareth. He has been followed by Tolück (*Anlegung der Bergpred. nach Matth.*)

[3] Horns of Hattin.

Jesus passed the night on the mountain in prayer, meditating on one of the most important steps in the development of his work.

The disciples and the crowd followed in his footsteps. At daybreak he called together a certain number of his disciples: they came to him, and he chose whom he would.

There were twelve, grouped two by two; their names have been carefully preserved by the first three Evangelists.[1] First, Simon, who was called Peter, and, with him, his brother Andrew; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, whom he called Boanerges, "The sons of thunder"; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite; and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

There was not one rich man among them, nor a scribe, nor a doctor, nor an elder, nor a ruler of a synagogue; they were all men of no account, unknown even in their own small province. Not one of them had studied; the most educated was the publican Levi, the only one perhaps who knew how to write; the others were boatmen, or artisans like their Master. They had nothing, these children of the people, neither fortune, nor knowledge, nor influence, and yet Jesus chose them as his apostles.

"I will make you fishers of men," he had said to Simon, and he kept his promise. He had told his disciples to pray to the Heavenly Father to send labourers into the harvest, and he himself had prayed all night: the Heavenly Father heard his Son, and these were the labourers of the first hour.

The twelve, henceforth, will never leave Jesus. His Spirit will be in them and over them, it will be their strength, their knowledge, and their power; they will preach the word of the Kingdom, and, for a sanction to their apostolic calling, they will have power given them to heal all infirmities and sicknesses, and to cast out devils in the name of their Master.

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[1] Matt. x. 2-4; Mark iii. 16-19; Luke vi. 14-16; Acts i. 13.

All human means, political sagacity, brute force, eloquence, and wealth, were disregarded. No such daring attempt is known to history; to save the world, Jesus relied on his Spirit alone; and to make apostles, he had only to imbue them with his Spirit. As soon as the choice was made, he came down from the summit of the mountain with the Twelve and halted in the plain a little below;[1] the band of his disciples and the multitude, who were waiting, gathered round him.

His heart glowed; the work of the Kingdom of God had reached a more exalted stage. The newly-chosen apostles rejoiced with a holy joy; for the gifts of God have the power to stir the heart and elate the spirits. Jesus sat down, his heart warmed, and he opened his mouth and began to teach, and, lifting up his eyes on his disciples, he cried:[2]

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

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[1] The apparent discrepancy between the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Luke disappears of itself. The Sermon took place, in point of fact, on the mountain, as St. Matthew says, but below the summits of Koroun-Hattin, on a plateau (*ἐπὶ τόπου πεδινοῦ*) or a plain, as St. Luke says, which separates them, but forms part of the hill.

[2] Most critics have treated the Sermon on the Mount as an artificial composition, made up of the scattered lessons of our Lord which St. Matthew collected. This idea may be correct, and it does not impair the truth of the doctrine. However, there seems to me an air of probability in a scene of such solemnity as that depicted by the first and third evangelists—a scene where Jesus in one day promulgated on the mountain the whole of his doctrines to his disciples, now his apostles.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."[1]

Never yet was presented the ideal of happiness, for which the human heart thirsts, in such thrilling beauty. Happiness is only to be found by participation in the Kingdom of God. Whoever looks for it elsewhere, in riches, in earthly joys and pleasures, in human approbation and glory, looks in vain: he prepares for himself bitter disappointment, hunger of soul, the tears of anguish. But to be comforted by the Heavenly Father, to be satisfied by him, to be pardoned by him, to see him, to become his son, and to feel him reign in us: this is to possess the earth, this is to gain eternal and boundless happiness.

The only road whereby we can enter the Kingdom, is by renunciation of the things of the world, by choosing poverty and humility, by holding fast to nothing. None may possess the Kingdom of Heaven unless he be humble and meek, and unless he have no other will than the will of the Father.

Heavenly joys are reserved for those who have wept, and the fulness of the soul for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. He who would earn the pardon of God must himself show mercy; he who would see God must be pure in heart; he who would be called the child of God must be a peacemaker, he must hold aloof from violence, must still hatred and calm the passions, and make brotherly love reign among men, as among the children of the same Father in heaven. Thus, that which would seem the negation of life, becomes its very condition and security.

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[1] Matt. v. 2; Luke vi. 20.

Poverty, humility, tears, persecution for righteousness' sake, the generous sacrifice of our rights, the rejection of all that disturbs the purity of the heart, the love of peace, the meekness that denies itself all violent resistance; persecution in this world, where the strong are always ready to crush the weak and to outrage justice—this is the road that leads to the Kingdom.

The disciples had already taken the first steps; they left all to follow their Master, and they were now learning from him gentleness and goodness; their hearts were purified and they felt, through intercourse with him, the hunger and thirst after true righteousness, and they put away violence in the presence of him whom the prophets called the Prince of Peace; they had already felt persecution, and the sect of the Pharisees, on his account, pursued them with its hatred.

Therefore, Jesus dwelt on the happiness of those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

"Yea, blessed are ye," said he to them, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

Jesus no longer spoke as a man, but as the Son of God. He is very Righteousness: to suffer for his sake, is to suffer for righteousness' sake, and to win God.

"Besides," added he, "persecution is the lot of the prophets. You are treated as they were." He spoke to them of their great apostolic mission and of their duties.

"Ye are the salt of the earth," said he, "but take heed lest you lose your savour. Salt that has lost its savour is good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world: men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, so that it may give light to all that are in the house."

Thinking of the future of his work and of his disciples, who were now countless in number, he compared them to a city set upon a hill, like that city which is to be seen from Koroun-Hattin, on the summit of the hills of Safed. The mountain is Jesus himself. A city so built cannot be hid.

"Let your light so shine before men, as a torch in the house, that they seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Jesus, both in his teaching and conduct, distinguished the Law and the prophets from the human traditions, which had been added by the doctors and the schools, especially since the time of Ezra. He submitted himself to the Law, but he would not be fettered by the traditions which he judged, and often condemned, which he rejected as an unnecessary burden.

The Pharisees, who confused the two, could not forgive this assertion of independence. They accused him of upsetting the Law, and they treacherously spread abroad this calumny among the people; they strove to discredit his work, and to impede his action, by opposing the new Master to Moses.

Jesus, to forewarn his disciples, maintained before them the sanctity of the Law and the prophets; he was not come to destroy, but to fulfil; he was no revolutionist, but a divine reformer; the Law which he proclaimed, was to fulfil that which was begun, and make perfect that which was imperfect.

"No," said he in a tone of authority, "I am not come to destroy the Law or the prophets: I am come to fulfil them. For verily I say unto you, heaven and earth shall not pass away till the Law is fulfilled, even to the last letter, even to every jot and tittle; and whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven."

All his conduct confirmed his words. His whole life, both public and private, had no other aim than to realise the Law and the prophets, even to the last letter ; and, until the Old Law was realised in its fulness, he would not proclaim the New Law of the Kingdom.

The Old Law is a dead letter, engraved on stone ; the New is the living Spirit, his own inspiration. The one exerts its influence from without, the other from within ; the one makes slaves, the other free souls ; the one terrifies, the other inspires love ; the one is without impulse, the other gives strength, even the strength of God ; the one lays stress upon forms and symbols, the other touches the substance, the reality ; the one promises, the other realises the promise : in one word, the Old Law asks relative perfection only ; the New demands absolute perfection.

" Except your righteousness," said Jesus, in addressing his disciples, " shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

And he set himself to explain to them, by various examples, and with reference to certain commandments of the Law, the imperfection and error, the formalism and self-will, the blindness and egotism, which betrayed themselves in the traditions of these hypocritical doctors, who affected such zealous devotion, and merely spoke of righteousness.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment ; and he shall die the death."[1] The Scribes had discussed the question of murder, the various cases where it was permissible, and the various penalties by which it should be punished ; but they stopped at the crime itself, and neglected the unseen cause from which it springs. " But I say unto you, Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment of God ; whosoever shall say to him, Raca,[1] shall be in danger of the Sanhedrin; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

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[1] Exod. xx. 13 ; Deut. v. 23.

In the casuistry of the Pharisees, manslaughter was left to the judgment of God; murder fell under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin, which punished it with death, and in certain cases added tortures or indignities to the capital punishment. The executed criminal was burnt in the valley of Gihon (Gehenna), a place held in abhorrence by the Jews, because in former times their fathers had sacrificed there and offered their children to Moloch.[2]

By applying these various penalties to inward anger, to expressions of contempt and insult, Jesus wished it to be understood that he condemned not only the outward and brutal act, but even the word and the hidden thought which prompts the word and leads to crime. All evil brings punishment, and justice demands that the punishment should be in proportion to the fault; sin will not be punished by man alone, but it will be avenged by God himself, for it stains the soul of which God alone is the judge.

Therefore "when thou bringest thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Yes, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest at any time he deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."[1]

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[1] "Raca," in the Hebrew *Reck*, a popular expression, very much used besides by Hebrew writers, and which implies a certain contempt. It has the sense of κενὸν and designates a worthless fellow.

Μωρὲ. It is a grave mistake to render this word by the Latin expression *stulte*, and the French *insensé*, *fou*. It occurs often in the book of Proverbs, and always signifies a depraved soul, deprived of all spiritual sense, and all but reprobate.

[2] Cf. *Talm. Hierosol.*, *Bava Kama*, fol. 5, 2.

As, in sins of temper, sin originates in anger and has murder for its outcome, so, in the case of concupiscence, the sin begins with the guilty desire and leads on to adultery.

The Scribes and Pharisees only considered the visible evil; Jesus struck it at its root: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Evil desire is provoked by opportunity: therefore Jesus commanded men to flee from temptation and to cast it away, in words of inexorable severity: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

"And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

The Master concedes nothing to the lower passions; he insists upon absolute purity. The guilty love for a woman, even the smallest secret desire, must be subdued. Jesus makes this the basis of holiness of life and freedom of spirit. The indissolubility of marriage was revived by Christ in all its rigour. Without directly blaming the divorce permitted by Moses, he condemned the abuse of it, which, with the connivance of the Scribes, had crept into practice, and degraded marriage to a polygamy in disguise.[1]

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[1] The small coins current among the Jews in the first century were: the *denarius* (a penny), equivalent to about ninepence of our coinage; the *meah*, or sixth of the denarius; the *pondion*, or half-meah; the *as*, or half-pondion; the *semissis*, or half-as; the *quadrantes* (farthing) or half-semissis; the *prutah* (mite), in Greek "lepton," or half-farthing. There are, therefore, ninety-six quadrantes in a denarius. (*Talmud Hierosol.*, *Kidduschin*, fol. 58, 4; Maimon., *Schekolin*, ch. i.

"It hath been said," he added, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement," implying that an act duly drawn up rendered any repudiation lawful and right. "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication," in spite of the writing of divorcement, "causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

It is plain that Jesus does not sanction divorce, but only separation. The marriage contract was to be governed henceforth by justice, and woman, protected by justice, was to escape from the tyranny, violence, or caprice of man.

One of the religious deviations of the Jews was their teaching concerning oaths. The Law said, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself."[2] The doctors held to this with rigour, troubling themselves little about the hastiness or vanity of oaths, but only looking to the truth of that which was sworn.

They even attributed a false piety to the multiplication of oaths on all occasions.[3] They swore by God and by his creatures, but the oath by the creature did not seem to them valid. Their casuistry admitted strange limitations, dictated by interest; to swear by the Temple and the altar was not binding with them; but to swear by the gold of the Temple, and by the gift on the altar, bound the conscience.

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[1] The school of the sage Hillel was of deplorable laxity; it taught that the woman who put too much salt into her husband's food, or burnt it, ought to be repudiated. The more rigid disciples of Schammai restricted this power of repudiation to the case of adultery on the part of the woman. Cf. *Talm. Hieros.*, *Gittin.*

[2] Levit. xix. 12.

[3] It is right to mention that some rabbis opposed this custom, but not in the same spirit that Christ did. They merely saw in it a danger, a temptation to perjury. "Be not immoderate," they said, "neither in oaths nor in laughter." *Tract. Dem.*, ch. 2.

No doubt these doctors were of opinion that the gold thrown in the "schouperot," and the food offered in sacrifice had acquired, by becoming the property of the priests, a more sacred and inviolable character. Jesus, with a word, put aside all these subtleties, and directed the conscience towards ideal perfection. It is not only perjury that must be avoided, but useless oaths.

"Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."[1]

The use of oaths implies a want of confidence among men; it supposes that he who makes the oath distrusts the others, or that the others distrust him. If one believes the word of a man, there is no need to call upon God as a witness, in the ordinary affairs of life. Those who love one another have faith in one another; the disciples of Jesus love one another, and they have no need of oaths. An oath, for them, would be merely a solemn affirmation of the truth, a testimony to the veracity of God, who cannot err, and to the frailty, the nothingness of man, whose word is always, even with the most holy, subject to error.

A harsh and terrible law weighed on the whole of the ancient world; on the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Greeks, and the Romans, as well as on the Jews; the *lex talionis.* It is mentioned in all the codes. Before the time of Jesus, Sâkya-Muni alone spoke of gentleness.

In the mind of the legislator, this law of iron had for its aim the restriction, the mitigation of just vengeance; it was the bridle of the human animal; but if it struck terror into the evil-doer, it encouraged and stimulated, in individual intercourse, that instinct of retaliation which is so natural and so strong in the offended. The traditions of the doctors had substituted a pecuniary fine for tortures, with the view of mitigating the severity of this pitiless law; but they left untouched the principle on which the law was based. Jesus tempered justice with mercy, and, in the individual intercourse of men, he discountenanced all spirit of vindictiveness, even under provocation.

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[1] In Maimonides (*Peah*, ch. 5) there is a timid reproduction of the sublime teaching of Jesus. "Every transaction," says the rabbi, "among the disciples of the wise, should be governed by truth and confidence. The formula is, 'Yes, yes; no, no.'"

"It hath been said by them of old time, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

This is how Jesus converts the tiger into the lamb; he did not condemn lawful defence, nor the right of punishment, but he raised himself above these, and showed to his disciples the ideal gentleness. Above the natural law of the natural man, he established the law of the children of God. He wishes us to yield to the evil-doer, and not to offer resistance, for resistance can only subdue him, gentleness may convert him; for gentleness makes martyrs, and martyrs have often touched the heart of their tormentors. This is true conquest and the highest strength. By this divine sign we may recognise the disciples of him who submitted his body to those who struck him, his cheeks to those who smote him, who turned not away from blows and insults, and who was sacrificed without resistance and without a protest, even as a sheep before her shearers is dumb.[1] Such divine teaching has begotten, and still begets from day to day, Christian martyrs; heroes of perfect gentleness; wherever it penetrates, it converts the sword into the cross; man no longer seeks to avenge and to kill, he learns to forgive and to die.

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[1] Isaiah xlix., liii. 7.

He who does not love, he who has not been transformed by the Spirit of God, may perhaps admire the sublimity of such teaching, but he will not understand it, for its very essence is perfect love. The law of love, in which all others are contained, was formulated by Jesus. Neither the Gentiles nor the Jews penetrated its depth, for neither the one nor the other learnt to love their neighbour, they did not even understand who was their neighbour.

For the Gentiles, the stranger, the barbarian, was an enemy; for the Jews, the Gentile was hateful; whilst the Scribes, the strict doctors, more narrow even than the Gentiles, only called an Israelite, and a pious Israelite, their neighbour; the heretic, the sinner, the Samaritan, were held in abomination; they despised them, they hated them. Their piety could not exist without hatred; to hate was a duty.

Jesus wished to clear away these fatal errors: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye do good to those who do good to you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye lend to those from whom ye hope to receive again, what reward have ye? Sinners also lend, to receive as much again. And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?"

"To you I say, Love your enemies, do good, and lend without hoping to receive again. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Love has found its ideal expression on the lips of Jesus. The best among the wise men said, "Listen to thy conscience"; Moses said, "Be obedient to the commandments of Jehovah, thy God, for he is terrible"; the Jewish doctors, "Respect the traditions of the Fathers and the 'hedge' raised by them around the sacred laws"; Jesus said to his disciples: "Conscience may lead you astray, the law is a yoke for slaves, the traditions of the elders are full of error. 'Be ye perfect even as your Heavenly Father is perfect.' Let his example be your law; his Spirit, your strength. Your Father is good: be ye good also; he loves evil-doers, his enemies: do as he does, love your enemies."

All these masters, whose whole talk was of righteousness, and who bore themselves proudly as the guides of the people, were to Jesus as blind men; it was to them he referred in the short and significant parable, where he declared them incapable of leading others. "Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master. He must strive to be perfect as his master."[1]

Motive is one of the essential elements of true righteousness, for it is the main-spring of our acts; if the motive is bad, it corrupts the act; if pure, it elevates it. Unless the motive is good, the best acts are but as vices, they have only the outward show of good. The man who does them has the appearance of virtue, but in the sight of God he is only a hypocrite.

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[1] Luke vi. 39.

Jesus requires of his disciples that their motives shall be as pure and as exalted as their actions. The greatest sin and one most difficult to eradicate, is a secret pride. Man loves himself more than he loves God ; he ever seeks his own glory, and pursues it, in his incurable vanity, even in his works of religion and piety ; he desires to be seen, applauded, and extolled. Even those who profess holiness do not escape the subtle poison of self-love, and in their case we meet with the more refined forms of pride.

The strictest Pharisees are an example. To be seen of the crowd, to be called masters, and to be thought righteous, was the vice which Jesus never ceased to unmask and to denounce, and against which he forewarned his disciples. "Take heed that ye do not your good works before men, to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."

He desired that we in doing good should forget all, both ourselves and others, and look only to the Father. "Hide yourselves," one of his disciples afterwards said, "remain unknown of all, in order to be better known of God."[1]

"Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." They seek their own glory, they have found it; let them be satisfied with their vanity.

"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth : that thine alms may be in secret," only for thy Father, "and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

The strict Pharisees were ostentatious even in their prayers. They might be seen standing in the synagogues, muttering aloud their phylacteries, and even stopping in the public way, and at the street corners, and in the market-places at the prescribed hour, to say their long forms of prayer. They loved to make a show. Jesus forbade this hollow display of piety. "When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

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[1] Cf. II. Cor. vi. 9.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee.

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

"Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

"Give us this day the bread for our subsistence.[1]

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen."

This is prayer in its ideal, necessary, and absolute form. Thus the children of God speak to their Father: it is the voice of perfect love, which loves God and desires his Kingdom and his glory; the expression of confidence in him who nourishes every living creature; the cry of gentleness which pardons and which hopes in return the mercy of the Father; the ardent aspiration of those, whom evil threatens and tyrannizes over, and who have faith in deliverance.

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[1] The adjective ἐπιούσιον, derived from ἐπι-οὐσία, for the substance, for the life, clearly indicates the bread necessary for subsistence, and not the bread for to-morrow, as certain commentors assume, wrongly in our opinion. Cf. Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae*, ad h. loc.

Let these things come to pass, and all will be perfect. There will be no more evil, nor hatred, nor hunger, nor disorder on the earth, but blessing and love, and joy and life, and peace and concord, in a word heaven ; God in man, and man in God.

Such is the teaching of Jesus. His soul has passed into these words, which express for us in human language the unutterable groanings of the Spirit[1] in every conscience, which has felt his inspiration.

Vanity intruded itself also into the frequent fasts which were in fashion among the Pharisees. They had not only increased their number, but they had intensified them ; they forbade all ablution and all use of ointment ; they covered their head and face with ashes,[2] and made a parade of austerity to gain the admiration of the people. "Do not imitate them," said Jesus to his disciples. "Be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance ; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee."

Jesus insists on the divine motive which should govern our acts and consecrate our duties. . His disciple should not look to the world, nor to men, nor to any created thing. No more egoism, nor self-love, no more vain joy and glory ; the Father only and always : it is to him alone we must look, and for whom we must act ; he is hidden in our conscience and in the depths of our being, but he sees, he hears, he rewards, he blesses. Those whom he sees are in the light, those whom he hears have strength, those whom he rewards and blesses have already a foretaste of his Kingdom and his glory.

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[1] "Quid oremus, sicut oportet, nescimus ; sed ipse Spiritus postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus." (Rom. viii. 26.)

[2] *Taanith*, c. 2.

Jesus wished to raise and to turn the hearts of his disciples to this divine realm, the heaven where the Father dwells; for just as motive is the mainspring of our acts, so love inspires and rules all our motives. Man is of the earth, covetous, greedy for gain, insatiable for riches, hungry for the pleasures of to-day, eager to enjoy them, to possess them, to heap them up; and these vain desires ruin and enslave him. Jesus will have us poor in spirit, untrammelled by these vanities, wholly belonging to God, the inexhaustible and secret source of our being, our life, our strength, and our joy.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

He compared love, and motive guided by love, with the eye, which gives us light.[1] The eye is the light of the body, motive is the eye of the soul. "The eye," said he, "is the light of the body: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

There cannot be two supreme loves. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."[1]

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[1] A current expression among the Jews. The "good eye" signified the generous soul; the "evil eye," the avaricious soul. "Let him who gives," say the Talmuds, "give with a good eye; let him who makes an offering make it with a good eye." (*Talmud Hierosol.*, *Bava Bathra*, fol. 14, 4.)

It would be a mistake to read in the words of Jesus a condemnation of worldly activity, the source of public and private prosperity; he only condemns that inordinate love of the luxuries of this life, which enervates work, and the licence of selfish pleasure. In recalling man to the love of the Father, he but tempers him anew in the fount of all energy; he sets him free and exalts all his powers.

No more vain cares henceforth; in becoming the child of God, man develops a child-like trust. There is no need for man to trouble himself, for he has a Father who watches, and who watches in secret. The soul of Jesus overflowed with this filial trust.

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

"For after all these things do the Gentiles seek," those who do not believe, those who do not love the heavenly

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[1] An expression of Syro-Chaldaic origin, which signifies riches, perhaps hoarded up, secret riches; in Hebrew, *matmon*. Cf. Reuss, *Hist. Evangel.*, *ad h. l.*

Father; but as for you, you have your Father, and "he knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."[1]

This love of the Heavenly Father, which inspired Jesus and his disciples, is the inexhaustible source of gentleness and tranquillity. The man who feels that he is loved of God is softened in heart, he loves as he is loved, he becomes humble and good, he thinks no ill, he does not judge; he sees his own moral needs rather than those of his brother.

"Judge not," said Jesus, "that ye be not judged.

"For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

"Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

"Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Goodness is not, however, to be blind. It should have tact, and discernment for the needs of others, and reverence for God who sustains and enlightens it; it should be prudent and reserved, and should husband the divine gifts. This is its gentle safeguard against the animal part of our nature, which is devoid of reverence, unbridled, aggressive, and unclean as dogs and swine.

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[1] In the Talmud (*Babyl. Erachin*, fol. 25) there is a maxim of a wise rabbi, Eliezer, which has a suggestion of the Gospels: "He who has food in his basket, if it be only a mouthful, and who says, 'To-morrow, what shall I eat?' is a man of little faith."

It was by these strong images that Jesus depicted the soul carried away by the violence of its passions, despising truth, profaning love, and resisting the Spirit.

"Give not," said he to his disciples, "that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

Nevertheless, Jesus does not demand a supine and passive trust. The love of the Father does not suppress, but rather stimulates spontaneity and initiative, and enlarges their sphere; it breathes into the soul noble desires which call forth ardent prayers. Man relies on himself to realise his petty schemes, but the children of God put their trust in the Father, whose work they do, for they know that all strength without him is in vain, and that nothing befalls but by his will.

In order that they should have this strength, and should enter into the purposes of God, Jesus said yet further to his disciples: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

"For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

"Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

"If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

The Father refuses nothing to prayer inspired by the Spirit and sustained by faith. The prayers of his children arouse the love and even the will of God.

One simple and divine command of Jesus contains the whole of our duty towards man; all human duties are comprised in it: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

"Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over."[1]

After having set forth these great principles of conduct, Jesus exhorted his disciples to be faithful and to beware of false prophets. He warned them against mere sentiment, which does not lead to good works and to sacrifice, and he revealed to them the invincible strength of those who should found themselves upon his word as upon a rock.

"Enter ye in," said he, "at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

"Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

"Wherefore by their fruits," that is to say by their works, "ye shall know the false prophets."

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[1] Luke vi. 37, 38.

Fruitfulness is the sign of the tree which God has planted, and of the prophet whom he sends.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Jesus is the only Master, the only judge; this he declares solemnly. We must listen only to him, and every living creature will be judged by him. He is the tree of life; the false prophets are the baneful tree, whose fruit is poison. His doctrine is eternal, unchangeable; it is the rock on which we must build.

"Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof."

Gentile wisdom and Jewish morality are here surpassed. What the one saw, as through a glass darkly, Jesus made plain; what the other only sketched, he completed. No teacher before him but had conceded something to human frailty, and to evil. Jesus wanted no compromise; he gave the final word for righteousness and holiness. He alone has the right to exact perfection, and to command heroism; for he alone communicates to frail conscience the energy of God; he alone delivers mankind from the passions which tyrannise over it, from anger and lust, hatred and vengeance; he teaches gentleness, austerity, goodness, love; he transplants man from the soil where he languishes and dies, and takes him purified to the Father who is in heaven, and who alone can give him felicity and everlasting life.

Sorrow is no longer an obstacle; it is a means. Those who renounce all shall possess God; those who suffer shall be the happiest, the gentle and meek the strongest; the persecuted shall be the victors; those who hunger after righteousness shall be satisfied, and the hearts pure from all selfishness and lust shall see God. Sacrifice is the lever which will lift up the world. It is the overthrow of human wisdom.

This is the legislative work of Jesus in its absolute beauty. Here is a monument which towers above all else, and which raises Jesus above all other teachers. The critic bows disarmed before its perfect harmony, the superhuman boldness of its design. And the monument has grown with time: Jesus is now reverenced and admired by mankind as he was then by the people of Galilee, and man is directed and encouraged by him, his path marked out, his goal made plain. He is the pyramid erected in the midst of the moving sands of the desert of man's pilgrimage.

CHAPTER V.

THE JOURNEY TO NAIN.

THE Sermon on the Mount stands in the public life of Jesus and in the fulfilment of his Messianic office as an act of absolute authority. As a legislator and as a Master, dependent on no one, he has dictated his law to every conscience, formulated his precepts, and inculcated his Spirit. He did not command in the name of God, as a simple prophet, he spoke in his own name; he did not repudiate Moses, he supplemented and went beyond him; but he thrust aside the traditional teaching of the doctors, and brought against it a terrible indictment; he spoke of himself as the only Master, and to him alone must we listen.

This attitude aroused the hostility of the official world, to whom the new Prophet appeared a mere agitator, and hostility, snares, and threats increased in proportion as his work developed; it was part of the purpose of God that it should grow in the midst of strife and by strife.

But the Heavenly Father granted to Jesus some days of peace; he had in his train some pure and trustful souls, who consoled him for the opposition of his enemies by making a demand on his divine power, and by giving him the only joy which he ever sought for among men: to heal the sick, to console the afflicted, to save sinners.

Jesus went down from the mountain, followed by the crowd, who had rejoined him at Koroun-Hattin, and who had been roused to enthusiasm by his words; he returned to Capernaum, where, however, he only made a short sojourn.

There was, in the town, a centurion, probably a Roman soldier, in the service of Herod Antipas,[1] who had won by his generosity the sympathy of the Jews, and who showed besides an ardent zeal for their religion. He was a good and upright man.

One of his servants, whom he loved greatly, lay dying, sick of the palsy. He had heard Jesus spoken of; and the healing of the son of another centurion, of the man sick of the palsy, of the man with the withered hand, and the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead, and many other miracles, had given him confidence. He sent a deputation of elders to Jesus, no doubt the rulers of the synagogue, to beseech him to come and heal his servant. These urgently entreated him, saying, "Do not refuse; he deserves that you should do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he has built us a synagogue."

Jesus went with them, and as he approached the house, the centurion saw him surrounded by his followers. The sight of the prophet evoked in him a feeling of reverence blended with fear, and he dreaded to receive him in his house, so he sent some of his friends to say, "Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

Jesus stopped, full of astonishment. The humility and trust of this Gentile touched him.

"Verily I say unto you," he cried, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

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[1] Matt. viii. 5-15; Luke vii. 1-10.

His thoughts, which always extended far beyond the immediate present, pictured in this man the whole Gentile world, which was to do honour to him, whom the Jews should reject.

"Many shall come," said he, "from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."[1]

Then, replying to the friends of the centurion, "Go and say to the centurion, that it shall be done unto him as he has believed."

On their return to the house, the messengers found the servant healed.

A great joy was in store for Jesus the next day. He left Capernaum, took the road from Damascus to Joppa by Tabor and the plain of Jezreel, and after one or two days' journey he came to a little town called Nain, at the foot of Djebel-Dahy. His disciples accompanied him, and the multitude, as usual, followed his steps. As he was approaching the gate of the city,[2] a funeral procession met him. The man to be buried was an only son, and his mother was a widow. She was accompanied by a crowd of people.

Jesus was distressed at the sight of this woman, and her tears moved him to pity.

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[1] Man, if without the pale of the Kingdom of God, is in the night of error and in the torments of evil. A perpetual feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was among the Jews a popular image for heavenly felicity. This symbol was a favourite one with Jesus. He made many allusions to it both in his sermons to the crowd, and in familiar converse: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine," he said a little before his death, "until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. xxvi. 29; Mark xiv. 25.) To be cast out of the bright, decorated banquet-hall into the cold and freezing night symbolised reprobation and supreme misery.

[2] Luke vii. 11, &c.

"Weep not," he said to her.

Then he approached the bier on which the dead man lay, with his face uncovered, and he touched him. The bearers stopped, and Jesus said in a loud voice:

"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise."

The dead man raised himself, sat up, and began to speak.

And Jesus, says the Evangelist, in words of deep meaning and exquisite tenderness, gave him to his mother. The dead man belonged really to him, who had brought him to life, and who had only made him his to give him back again to his mother. There was a shudder of fear in the crowd, and then a burst of joy and thanksgiving, and some cried out, "A great prophet is risen up among us, and God hath visited his people."

The power to express their feelings in the vivid phrase born of truthful emotion belongs to the people. The educated, blinded by their learning and hardened by their narrow prejudices, let the lightning of God pass them by, without seeing or understanding it; but the people, simple of heart, and keenly responsive, are awed by the miracle; they bow down in silence before the presence of the Omnipotent, and they glorify his goodness.

This is the second time that Jesus raised from the dead.

As the Father has the power of life, so also has the Son.

The prophets sometimes exercised power over death, in the name of God, and in the name of Jesus, but they were rather the occasion than the instrument of the miracle, they asked God to intervene and to manifest himself; but Jesus has power over life and death; he spoke as a Master, and death was obedient to him as to God.

His power was always at the service of his goodness, and his boundless goodness was always at the service of man. All that dies can come to life again at his word, and in this world of death, where death has been sown by sin, Jesus, by destroying sin, has made life germinate. This young man of Nain is a symbol of those unnumbered souls for whom the Church mourns, and whom the voice of the Saviour daily recalls to the life of God.

Nain is only a miserable village of poor, dirty, ragged fellahs, who live in hovels even more sordid than themselves. Among the ruins of the primitive village may be distinguished the ruins of two mosques, which were once Christian chapels.[1] Nopal-bushes with their spreading green boughs surround the dingy houses, and from among them there rises a small, pure white church. This is the spot where Jesus brought to life the son of the widow.

The miracle at Nain made a great sensation in all the country round, and in the whole of Judaea; no miracle had produced a greater effect. Opinion seemed overpowered and conquered: it was plain that God was at length manifesting himself; he was with his people, and the Prophet of Galilee was his messenger.

The report of these events was not long in reaching the ears of John the Baptist. News spreads in the East across scattered and novelty-loving populations with extreme rapidity. If there was anyone in the nation who might be expected to follow the career of Jesus with a breathless interest, it was the captive of Herod. No one was waiting with more impatience for the coming of the Kingdom, which he had proclaimed as at hand. From the depths of his captivity, in the fortress of Machaerus, he lived in spirit with him whom he had pointed out as the Chosen One; he followed him and watched his growing fame. Prisoners were not then cut off from all intercourse with the outside world; those most severely treated, even those who were kept in chains, were allowed to receive visits from their family and friends.

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[1] Cf. Victor Guérin, *Descript. de la Palestine. Galilee*, vol. i., p. 179.

The disciples of John went in and out, giving him full accounts of the work of Jesus, and keeping him informed of the state of public opinion.

Nothing is more depressing to a soul consumed with zeal than to see itself reduced to inaction. John felt this in his prison.

He knew that the life of the Messiah was toilsome, and that he had already encountered a violent opposition from the Pharisees, priests, and elders; and yet he could no longer do anything to help him in his work. To this suffering was added a keen trouble, more cruel even than his forced inaction and his forebodings of his approaching end, arising from the doubts felt by his own disciples concerning Jesus, and their jealousy and persistent mistrust towards him. These feelings, which had already shown themselves before his captivity had progressively grown in strength. The supreme revelations of God, his love for Jesus, the knowledge of his Messianic mission and of the new Kingdom, in a word, all the purest conceptions of his spirit, had failed to penetrate their minds. In spite of all his efforts, he found them still narrow, stiff, and jealous, and ready to make common cause with the enemies of his Master. Not only did they reproach the disciples of Jesus with their want of strictness and ceremony, but they would not recognise in Jesus the Messiah of the prophets. Even the striking miracles which they had seen did not convince them.

After all, things remained much as they were: the Kingdom of the people of God did not appear, and Jesus gave no sign that he was thinking of this necessary restoration, indeed he seemed rather to ignore it and condemn it; if he were indeed a messenger from God, it was still possible that he was not the triumphant Messiah. The disciples of John stumbled at these difficulties, and the admonitions of the prisoner did not succeed in calming or undeceiving them.

For his part, his faith knew no eclipse; he was not to be counted among the undecided and the fickle. The Spirit, which had chosen him from his mother's womb, never left him; he never knew doubt or showed inconsistency. The divine voice which he had heard repeated to him the name of the well-beloved Son, the name of the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world. He knew that the victim would, at the last day, become the great judge, and, in the humble guise of a man, he saw in Jesus him who holds the winnowing-fan in his hand. Imprisonment had never shaken the convictions of the prophet. Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake do not stray from God; rather they are uplifted by him and strengthened in his might.

Faithful and heroic to the last, John found in the grief which he felt at the attitude of his disciples, an inspiration worthy of his noble character. He called two of his disciples and said to them, "Go to Jesus and take him this message: 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?'"[1] John, in his powerless position, was ready to efface himself. That which he could not accomplish, Jesus would know how to do; and he gave him by this message a supreme testimony of confidence, and an opportunity to declare his Messianic character.[2]

We are not told in the sacred writings where our Lord was when the messengers of John came to him.

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[1] Matt. xi. 2-19; Luke vii. 18.

[2] This interpretation of the message of John agrees with the almost unanimous tradition of the Fathers and doctors, with the exception of Tertullian and Justin. (Tertul., *De Baptism.*, ch. x. l. iv.; *Cont. Marcion.*, c. xviii.; Just., *Quaest.* xxxviii.; *Ad Orthodox.*)

Rationalistic criticism naturally disputes it, and contends that John had grown weak in faith and doubtful of Jesus in his prison. Such an idea raises two unanswerable objections: one drawn from the character of John; the other from the express witness of Jesus. One of the striking characteristics of the Baptist was his firmness. Such natures as his are not weakened by trial, but rather strengthened; and if the prisoner of Herod had vacillated in his convictions concerning the Messiah, how was it that Jesus chose the very moment of his failure to exalt him above all the prophets to call him the true Elias?

At the moment when they joined him, Jesus, surrounded by the multitude, was healing the sick, casting out devils, and giving sight to the blind. The messengers came through the crowd to him, saying, "John the Baptist has sent us to you with this message, 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?'"

The answer was firm and decisive.

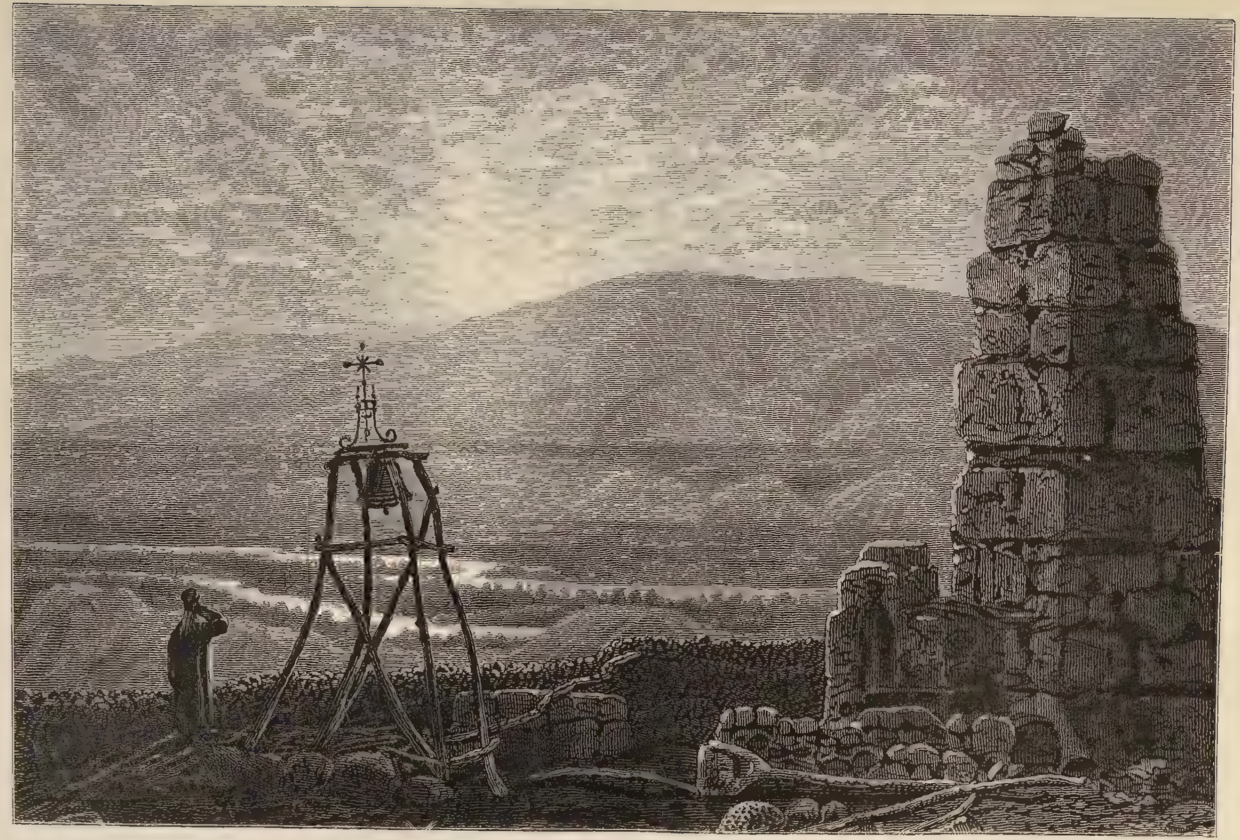
"Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Then he added a word of sorrowful warning, addressed to those who were resisting these signs: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."[1]

The question propounded by John to Jesus called forth a formal declaration of his Messianic character. Every effort of the Forerunner of Jesus during his life was concentrated on this one point; his one ambition was to lead the people to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. On the point of death, he was absorbed with the thought which had dominated and illuminated his life, and he asked of Jesus himself the testimony which was to consecrate his career, to convince his refractory disciples, and to rally them once for all on the side of the Master. The answer of Jesus, though brief and reticent, was finally and triumphantly clear; it gave in a few words the irrefutable signs of the true nature of the Messiah, and it contained, in a gentle form, a supreme warning.

The signs of the Messiah were the miracles. Isaiah said in definite terms, which Jesus borrowed of him: "God himself will come and save us. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.[2] The Spirit of the Lord is

[1] Luke vii.; Matt. xi

[2] Is. xxxv.



THE VALLEY OF THE JORDAN, NEAR EL RIHA, THE MODERN JERICHO.

upon me; he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the poor."[1]

There was nothing worldly, nothing national, nothing political in his work; he was not troubled about the liberation or the human glory of a nation, but about the salvation and the deliverance of mankind. He appealed to no worldly power. God alone, in his infinite goodness, was the hidden source of blessing; the poor in spirit, who believe themselves nothing and who have nothing, were the chosen people in whom his goodness took effect, and who welcomed the good news.

These simple words, "To the poor shall the gospel be preached," alone proclaim the audacity of the enterprise. Human wisdom, with its pretension to speak to the chosen few, and its inability to touch the simple, was confounded. What reason has not been able to do God will accomplish. His light which reveals everything, from the want of man to the secrets of God, will shine on every conscience; and its rays will be the more piercing in proportion as the soul is more lowly and humble. Intellect is nothing, the heart is everything. Behold the sublime equality of the Kingdom of God! In the nothingness of our need God visits us, and the humblest, those most convinced of their own insignificance, are the first, the most holy, the only great.

The outward poverty of Jesus, his apparent powerlessness, his humble condition, his attitude with regard to the observances of the Pharisees, his repudiation of every political and worldly element in his work as Messiah, his sympathy and goodness to the poor, the publicans and the sinners, the assertion of his right to the title and to all the functions of a purely spiritual Messiah: all these things scandalized many of the educated and of the most influential, rigid, and patriotic of the Jews. The disciples of John were among the number. These offended feelings grew from day to day; death and the cross put their seal upon them, and they were destined to extend throughout the ages. Those minds which only believe in their own wisdom, those which are wedded to their own systems, slaves to their preconceived ideas, eager to enjoy and intent only upon that which perishes, they will not recognise the signs of the Saviour; they will turn from him, calling the wisdom of God folly, and the secret strength which wins the lowly weakness.

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[1] Is. xvi., lxi.

To such men Jesus said, in warning and in lamentation:

"Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

The disciples of John withdrew.

As soon as they were gone Jesus began to speak of their master to the people who surrounded him. There were in the crowd some Scribes and Pharisees, and it was possible that some would give an interpretation to the message offensive both to Jesus himself and to John. He defended his forerunner to the people in a discourse full of energy; he praised his firmness,[1] his austerity, and his prophetic grandeur.

"What went ye out into the wilderness to see?" he said to the crowd. "A reed shaken with the wind?" No, John was no reed. The crowd could not question his energy, his vehemence, his inflexible courage, his resolute character, his love for justice; these qualities recalled the oak which does not bend rather than the pliant reed.

"Then," continued Jesus, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?" The austerity of the Baptist had impressed the people even more vividly than his energy. He was still in the imagination of the people, with his raiment of camel's hair and his girdle of leather, the type of an ascetic; he had not the slightest resemblance to those courtiers among the Pharisees and Sadducees, who clothed themselves in sumptuous garments to fawn upon princes.

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[1] Matt. xi. 7-19; Luke vii. 24-35.

"They do not live in the wilderness; they must be sought under fretted ceilings and in kings' houses."

"Then," cried Jesus, repeating the question with increasing emphasis, "What went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet." He not only prophesied as others did, but he had himself been prophesied. His coming was an event which the prophets had foretold. "For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

"Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." The others only perceived the Messiah from afar; he saw him with his own eyes; he showed him to the people, and prepared the way for him. But, notwithstanding his greatness, "the least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he," for, incorporated with the Messiah, he partakes of the fulness of the Spirit, and enters into the joys of the Kingdom of whose advent John had been the constant witness. "The Law," with its symbols, all "the Prophets," with their oracles, "even to John," who was the chief among them, prepared the way, announced and foretold the long-expected Kingdom; and "from the days of John even to this day, the crowd thrusts forward to enter the Kingdom and the violent take it by force. The gate is narrow, and must be stormed.[1]

"And do not say that the Kingdom of God will not come until after Elias has appeared, as the prophet Malachi foretold; for if you would understand the hidden meaning, the Elias which was to come is John.

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[1] The expression *βιάζεται* indicates the violence suffered by the Kingdom of Heaven from those who thrust themselves forward to seize it and who appropriate it as booty. The words *ἁρπάζουσιν αὐτήν βιάσται* are an allusion to those generous souls among the publicans and sinners who obtained the Kingdom by the strength of their repentance and faith.

"He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

The report of the words of Jesus must have reached the ears of the prisoner, and we can imagine his indescribable joy, in learning that these words concerning him had fallen from such lips.

All the people, publicans and sinners, by receiving the baptism of the Forerunner, had justified God's wisdom and had forwarded his purposes; whilst the Pharisees, thinking themselves above reproach, and rejecting the baptism of John, had despised his counsels in their hearts.

The same thing happened with regard to Jesus. The poor, the insignificant, and the sorrowful, hastened to him, receiving his teaching and claiming his benefits; but the learned, the elders, and the rulers, hardened in their formalism, and immovable in their traditions, were offended; they resisted and argued and closed their hearts. This pride, their self-righteousness, their self-complacency, were in his eyes the great obstacle to the Kingdom. To show this proud spirit in its true light and to confound it in the Pharisees, his own adversaries and those of John, he said: "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, playing at weddings and funerals, and who say to one another, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. John came, neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man comes eating and drinking, and you say, Behold a man gluttonous and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

Both these things offend you: austerity and simplicity of life. "But wisdom is justified of her children."

A touching scene proved it, for all the words of Jesus are verified. His teaching and his deeds, blended together with divine art, throw light the one upon the other.

A certain man named Simon prayed Jesus to come and eat with him at his house.[1] He was one of those Pharisees, who, not recognizing the Prophet as the ideal Messiah of whom their religion taught, regarded him with mistrustful curiosity. Jesus was received without any mark of honour ; no water was brought to him to wash his feet ; no kiss was given ; no oil was poured upon his head. He entered as an ordinary guest, went to the table, and reclined on one of the couches, which were placed, according to custom, for the guests.

" And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that he was at table in the house of Simon, entered into the room where all the guests were.[2]

" She brought an alabaster box of ointment. She came to Jesus and stood behind him at his feet, and began to wash them with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment.

" Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him : for she is a sinner.

" Then Jesus, answering his thoughts, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. Master," replied Simon, " say on.

" There was a certain man which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay he forgave them both. Which of them will love him most ?

" Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. Jesus said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

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[1] Luke vii. 36-50.

[2] See Appendix R : *The Two Anointings.*

"Then turning to the woman, who was kneeling at his feet, he said, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she, she hath washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven: for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, loveth little.

"Then Jesus said to the woman, Thy sins are forgiven.

"And they that sat at meat with him were astonished, and filled with horror, and they murmured within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins?"

"But Jesus said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

This sinner, whose name has been withheld by the Evangelist, through a sense of delicacy and reserve, has been recognized by almost unanimous tradition as Mary Magdalene.

She was a member of a rich family. Her brother Lazarus possessed great wealth at Jerusalem; her sister Martha lived at Bethany, and she herself had lands in Galilee and lived on the western shore of the lake at Magdala: hence her surname Magdalene. We are not told whether she was free, married or a widow. Of her youth only the memory of her sins has been preserved. She was one of those who are carried away by their heart and by passion, and who sacrifice everything to them, even honour. Her life of shame was notorious.

Two women of that time, both princesses, the one a Gentile, the other a Jewess, Julia the daughter of Augustus, and Herodias, were notorious throughout the world, the former for her unbridled licentiousness, the latter for her incest. The fallen woman, beyond restraint, braves public opinion in order to avenge herself on those who despise her. Vices grow and beget vices; mad loves engender vanity, pride, jealousy anger, voluptuousness with all its refinements, and self-indulgence with all its indolence.

The Evangelist reveals by a strange expression the abyss to the bottom of which Mary Magdalene had fallen. "It was she out of whom went seven devils." She bowed under the secret yoke of the powers of evil, though no outward disorder betrayed their presence. We may call this a kind of invisible possession, not less formidable than bodily possession, for it yields up our senses to the violent and overpowering suggestions of the spirit of evil.

The number of those who are thus enslaved is very great. No human will is able to set them free; it would be shattered in pieces in a conflict with forces stronger than itself. The Spirit of God alone has the power to effect these prodigious deliverances, in comparison with which physical miracle is as nothing. The passions, even when indulged, cannot satisfy; and the soul hungers after God with groans and tears. The sinful woman had known this anguish and this void; she must have crossed the path of the Prophet who was stirring the heart of Galilee. Perhaps she had heard him speak to the crowd, and it is even possible that Jesus had already the friendship of her brother Lazarus, and had received hospitality from Martha at Bethany, whilst Mary Magdalene was leading her life of pleasure.

His words assuredly found an echo in her heart; they had power to touch even her wretchedness. The teaching of the Master seemed to be made for her. Some of his words would strike straight to her conscience and to her heart. He said that he was sent, not for the just, but for sinners; he spoke of the lost sheep and of the joy in finding it again. And it was he who said, "The publicans and the harlots shall enter the kingdom of God before the Pharisees." She knew the tears and the sorrows of her life of passion; and these words of Jesus, "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted," seemed addressed to her.

Nothing has more power over the soul, burdened with the weight of its faults, than the gentleness which sympathizes, and the voice which pardons. The kindness of the Master, his goodness and his mercy, were well known; but God had never shown himself in a more tender light, the beauty of his character had never been seen in a more touching form.

We do not know what passed in the soul of Mary Magdalene, nor the nature of her inward conflicts. We do not know how the divine ray, which was to save her, penetrated her conscience. But a day came when her eyes were opened, and she recognized in Jesus the Saviour who pardons. On that day she hesitated no longer. Such natures as hers do not stop half-way; their greatness is shown in pressing onward to the goal with all their strength, whether for good or evil. She wished her repentance to be as open as her sin. He who loves does not stay to reason; he is obedient as a slave to the feeling which rules him; and this woman, who braved opinion to follow her earthly passions, once more set it at nought to throw herself at the feet of Jesus.

Having heard that he was invited to the house of Simon the Pharisee, and feeling herself urged by an irresistible force; she longed to confess to him her sorrow, she burned to express her repentance and her sorrow, her love and her faith, and to hear words of mercy and pardon. No one knew of the drama which was the very crisis of her life; she was still to all a lost and fallen woman.

She entered, veiled and silent, not even seeing the disdainful looks of the guests who, in their sanctimonious pride, were offended and shocked at her presence. She went and stood behind Jesus, holding in her hand a box of alabaster filled with ointment.

The greatest honour which could be paid to a man, or a prophet, in the East, was to break one of these fragile vessels and to pour the precious contents upon his head and feet.

Mary said nothing, for silence is the sign of an overflowing heart; no word escaped her lips; she was overcome by her sorrow and by the love that God had shown her. But in her attitude of humiliation, her tears, her kisses, her streaming hair, there was an eloquence that is beyond the reach of words.

She sees in Jesus not only a prophet to be revered, but the Son of God to be adored. She does not come before him, as the multitude, to beg for earthly benefits; she comes to implore him who can heal and purify and transform the soul. Never did repentance shed such tears; never had repentant love such tenderness and such longing after pardon; never did tears and perfumes symbolize such lively faith, such intense devotion. In Mary Magdalene may be seen the perfect type of the convert; and he by whom such feelings were inspired and welcomed is no mere man; under the form of humanity he is the incarnation of beauty and infinite goodness.

We see this clearly by his words. They show us how he identifies himself with the good, that is, with the God who is offended and who pardons, the God who welcomes the repentance of the wounded heart and makes it whole. His divinity shines out resplendent; he inspires a love which is the love of God himself, the love which covers a multitude of sins. The man in him is effaced, and the transfigured sinner beholds and adores God himself in his unspeakable mercy. "Thy sins are forgiven thee," he said. "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

To forgive sins is the privilege of God only. It is faith in God alone that saves the lost soul, and it is beyond man's power to give pardon, as it is to give peace. Jesus only can say these things and bring them to pass. Those alone can understand them, who, like Mary Magdalene, have heard and proved them in the depth of their conscience; the rest, who, like the Pharisees, neither believe nor love, are offended in their blindness, and murmur at it. But Jesus is justified of his elect.

Henceforth, the sinner can take courage; his wretchedness is no longer beyond hope. Evil has found a master; man has only to believe and repent to overcome it. Low as we may have fallen, we have tears and faith still left us; let us imitate the sinner Mary, and fall weeping at the feet of Jesus.

Tens of thousands of souls have arisen from degradation in the footsteps of the sinner of Magdala. She has thrown open the path, and leads on the procession of the converted and restored among women. She personifies mankind, once lost in vices, which has found at the feet of Jesus that God whom she should love, and whose love transfigures her, and gives her mercy and peace. The scene of the feast in the house of Simon is for ever being repeated, like all else in the Gospel history. The Pharisee, defiant even in good intentions, has not changed; he is always with us, unable to understand the God who pardons, and the repentant soul which expiates and adores. But by the side of these obstinate ones, hard of heart and stubborn of spirit, we can see and admire the souls that love and faith have saved. The tears of the Magdalene flow on unceasingly; the perfumes are ever poured upon the Son of Man; he is adored from century to century, and ceases not to speak to men the encouraging and consoling words: Many sins are forgiven to them who have loved much. Your faith hath saved you; ye who weep, ye who believe, ye who love, go in peace.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THE days which followed the arrival from Nain, and the striking conversion of Mary Magdalene, were spent in preaching the Gospel to the people.

The activity of Jesus as a preacher was untiring. He went, says the Evangelist,[1] from city to city, from village to village, everywhere preaching and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. He travelled with the Twelve, without rest or respite. Jesus possessed nothing, neither treasures, nor lands, nor houses; absorbed in his divine work, he took thought neither of food nor raiment. But the Father provided him with all things; he it was who called to the honour of serving him certain women,[2] whose perfect devotion to him was transfigured by faith, and increased a hundredfold by love. Many of them had been healed by Jesus of their infirmities; and gratitude, a sentiment so natural to woman, made them his faithful servants. At their head, after the mother of Jesus, was Mary Magdalene, the penitent. Joanna, whose husband, Chuza, was the steward of the tetrarch Herod, as well as a certain Susanna, of whom nothing is known but the name, are also mentioned among them. These watched with tender solicitude over the Master and his disciples; they were the providence of the little community; rich and generous, they placed their goods at his service; defraying the expenses of the journeys, preparing the food, and selecting the dwellings whose hospitality Jesus and his followers were to receive.

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[1] Luke viii. 1.

[2] Luke viii. 2, 3.

Capernaum, and the lake on whose borders it stands, continued to be the centre of his journeyings. Thence he departed and thither he returned, bringing back with him, from the different countries into which he travelled, a numerous and enthusiastic following. As the scene of his discourses to the multitude, Jesus chose the high and solitary mountain, the clear and tranquil lake. The Gospel of the Kingdom was proclaimed from the summits of the hills, and from a fisherman's boat. The walls of a synagogue were too narrow for the grandest teaching to which the world has ever listened; it had need of the open air, the solitudes with their echoes, the sea with its murmuring waves.

When he departed from Nain, Jesus returned to Capernaum; according to his custom, he retired to the sea-shore, and the people soon gathered around him. Then he entered the ship, which his disciples always kept in readiness for him, and while the multitude remained on the shore he began to teach them.[1]

"Behold," he said to them, "a sower went forth to sow; and whilst he sowed some fell by the wayside, and the birds of the air came and ate them up.

"And other some fell upon stony ground, where they had not much earth; and they sprung up immediately, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

"And others fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

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[1] Matt. xiii. 1-25; Mark iv. 1-20; Luke viii. 4-15.

"And others fell upon good ground, and they brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold."

Then he warned his hearers not to take his words in their literal meaning, but to endeavour to comprehend the lesson hidden in them, saying, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus respected the guiding power of conscience; he did not seek to subdue it by force, he called to it gently. It is the part of conscience, helped by the grace of God, to respond; to open itself to the light; to pledge its good will by a first effort. This exercise of faith is for man the beginning of salvation; by it he merits the justice of God. The disciples, eager as they were to understand, did not always succeed in grasping the meaning of the Master's teachings; and while the multitude withdrew without seeking the light, they went in secret to question the Lord.

"Ye do not comprehend this parable," Jesus said to them, gently reproaching them with their lack of understanding; "if ye understand not this, which is so plain, how shall ye understand the others?"

Jesus does not say that he is the sower, but he leaves it to be understood. No other metaphor could express his office so exactly, and with so profound a significance. He alone possesses the seeds of eternal life, and he holds them in his hand. The greatest among men sow only for death: Jesus sows for eternity. Nothing is more living than the seed; it is the centre and the source of life. The word of God, in the soul, is the beginning of its spiritual life. Just as the seed is at once matter and force, the word is a sensible sign, an incarnation of the Spirit of God.

"The seed fallen by the wayside," said Jesus, "which the birds carried away, are they who hear the word with a dry and shallow heart; the wicked one cometh and catcheth it away. And he who received the seed upon stony ground, is he that heareth the word, and immediately receiveth it with joy: yet hath he not root in himself, but is only for a time: and when there arise tribulation and persecution because of the word, he is presently offended."

The root of the soul is God; the profundity of the soul comes from him; its life flows from his Spirit. The soul which seeketh not God has no depth. What is sown in it "is scorched by the first rays of the sun, by the fire of tribulation. And the seed sown among thorns are those whom the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts after other things have mastered, choking the word and making it fruitless. And these are they who are sown upon the good ground, who hear the word, and receive it and guard it in a pure and upright heart and practise it patiently."

Virtue is the fruit of doctrine; in some it produces thirty, in some sixty, in some an hundredfold.

Nothing is more hidden, more mysterious, than the seed; nothing humbler or more secret than the divine word. The one is revealed by its fruit, the other is glorified by virtue. The soul is enlightened by the works of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, longsuffering, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity.

In relation to the virtues of his disciples, Jesus said to them, "You shall be the light of God. Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?"

The Father brings all things to perfection and to the light.

"For there is nothing hid which shall not be made manifest, neither was it made secret but that it may come abroad."

This universal law has found its fullest application in Jesus and his work. The Spirit concealed in him, the truth hidden under his parables, the Kingdom of God so humble and so little known of the world, confined at first to the souls of a few despised men, have filled the earth with their splendour, their power, their virtue.

This indestructible vitality of the Kingdom is represented by Jesus in another parable:

"So is the kingdom of God," he says, "as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how. For the earth of itself bringeth forth fruit; first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear."[1]

The virtue of God acts mysteriously in the soul of every creature, bestowing upon it growth and strength; and it is not in the power of man to hinder that which God sows and nourishes.

The sowing of the seed was a favourite metaphor with Jesus; it recalled to him his work. Nothing had ever a humbler origin; nothing has risen to so great a height.

"Again, to what shall we compare the Kingdom? To a grain of mustard seed, which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than any herbs and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."[2]

This is indeed the fitting symbol of the Church of Christ, this grain of mustard seed become the giant tree, whose branches cover the earth and tower over all things. The greatest geniuses, those eagles upborne on soaring pinion, fatigued with their flight, and weary of their wisdom, have come, century after century, to repose in the shadow of the doctrine of Jesus, which alone satisfies, comforts, and enlightens. That which Jesus saw and prophesied, his first disciples could only believe and hope for; but we of a later age, more fortunate, behold it. The work of Jesus is the prolongation of his personality; time separates us from the one, but gives us possession of the other.

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[1] Mark iv. 26-29.

[2] Matt. xiii. 31-32; Mark iv. 30-32.

He expressed the same thought under another image, comparing the "Kingdom of heaven to leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened."[1]

The true leaven is the Spirit of God; the woman is the Church; and the meal, the people. Insipid in itself, mankind takes its savour from contact with the Spirit, which gradually penetrates and transforms it.

The Kingdom of God in this world has not yet attained its full perfection. Good and evil dispute with each other the possession of the earth, and side by side with the great sower, who sows the good seed, the enemy sows the tares, and the two grains grow together in the same field.

"The Kingdom of heaven," he said, "is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

"And when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, there appeared also the tares. Then the servants of the master of the house came and said unto him, Master, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? And he said to them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, No; lest while you gather up the tares ye root up the wheat also; let both grow until the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn."

The disciples had not understood the hidden meaning of the tares sown in the field. The Master explained it to them when they were alone:

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

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[1] Matt. xiii. 33.

"And the field is the world.

"And the good seed are the children of the Kingdom. But the tares are the children of the wicked one.

"And the enemy that sowed them is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

"Even as tares therefore are gathered up and burnt with fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that work iniquity: and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

"Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father."

Each of these sentences of Jesus is grand, sublime in its simplicity; they embrace all things, and describe in vivid outlines his great work, from its origin to its eternal consummation. The strife between good and evil is willed of God: the servants of the Master should accept it with resignation. Anger, so natural to man, impels the well-disposed to root up the tares. Jesus teaches us to tolerate evil, lest, in tearing it up with violence, we should destroy the good also; he should imitate the Heavenly Father in his infinite patience.

The hour will come when the wheat and the tares shall be separated by the power of God; an hour at once terrible and comforting, terrible to the wicked, comforting to the children of the Kingdom.

Jesus, looking to the consummation of his work, saw from afar his own glory, the glory of his disciples, and the terrible condemnation by his Father of those who should turn away from him. He would frequently pourtray to the multitude such visions, brilliant or gloomy, of the world to come; they are wholesome, for they fill the mind with terror and hope: terror, which is the curb that restrains man from evil; hope, which is the spur that urges him towards God.

It was this idea which inspired him with the parable of the net:[1]

"The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a net cast into the sea, gathering together of all kinds of fish, which, when it was filled, they drew out, and, sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and shall separate the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

It would be difficult to overestimate the zeal of Jesus in enlightening the Galilaean people, and teaching them his doctrines. His discourse abounds in vivid images.

"Would you know what the kingdom of heaven is like?" he said to them. "A treasure hidden in a field, which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.[2]

"Again, the kingdom of heaven," he said, "is like unto a merchant seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all that he had, and bought it."[3]

And man must indeed give up all things if he would possess God. Only at the price of all he has can he purchase the pearl and the field and the treasure which is there concealed. The timid and the selfish draw back, unwilling to impoverish themselves to obtain the riches of the Kingdom; one will not give up his pleasures, and he loses the joys of God; another holds to his narrow science, and cannot enter into eternal truth; another cherishes worldly ambition, and rejects the grandeur of the life eternal reserved for the children of God.

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[1] Matt. xiii. 47-50.

[2] Matt. xiii. 44.

[3] Matt. xiii. 45-46.

The whole teaching of Jesus, with its essential traits, is contained in his parables.

The divine function and the dignity of the Master, his life of suffering and his final triumph, the inward character and universality of his work, with its humble beginnings, its unobtrusive energy, with its incessant struggles and their immense results, the duties and the qualifications of him who would enter into them, the hostility of the world, the part played by Satan, the sower of the tares; the part played by the angels, those invisible harvesters; the providence of the Father, who watches over the great drama and prepares its result; all this is indicated in them.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the central idea of all the teachings of Jesus, the idea which always moved the masses most powerfully. The multitude were far from grasping the profound significance of his parables; they perceived only the outer shell, as it were, the exterior signs, and all that could flatter their prejudices or appeal to their interests. The miracles especially dazzled them; but the doctrines themselves did not enlighten them. The multitude have something of the child in them; they are more impressed by power than by wisdom, and even when they admire the teaching of Jesus, the Scriptures lay stress upon this, it is his power which astonishes and subjugates them.

"Behold," they said, "he teaches them as one having authority, not as the Scribes and Pharisees."[1]

Yet Jesus undertook the difficult task of preaching the Gospel to them, and opening their conscience to the truth.

No popular orator can ever be compared to him, even in point of eloquence. He stands at the head of that select and saintly few who have received from God the power to move the people without appealing to their earthly passions. He never made use of the slightest sophism, he never deviated in the slightest from the truth: he could show consideration, without flattering them, for the weaknesses of those who heard him; he always suited his discourse to his hearers, employing one form of speech with his apostles in the familiarity of private intercourse, another with the Pharisees and the learned, and yet another when he addressed the multitude.

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[1] Matt. vii. 29; Mark i. 22; Luke iv. 32.

To his disciples he opens his heart, whence flow truths, eloquent and tender; addressing the learned, he appeals to the Scriptures, he confounds them by the irresistible logic of his arguments, and rebukes their hypocrisy by his crushing anathemas; to the people he expounds his doctrine veiled in parables.

This figurative style was much affected by Jewish rhetoric. The distinguished rabbis were renowned for their parables and their maxims. Every people has its literary genius; the Hindoos have their tales and fantastic stories; the Greeks and the Romans their dialogues and their fables; the Jews their parables and their proverbs.

In adopting this mode of popular teaching, Jesus has imparted to it a simplicity, a truth, a sobriety, a charm never known before. The greater number of his parables remain engraven on the memory; they realize abstract beauty. All mankind know and admire them; the child spells them out and the man meditates upon them, the ignorant understand them, and thinkers find in them a source of boundless illumination.

The very essence of the parable is that it facilitates the comprehension of invisible and immaterial things, difficult to express or hard to understand, by comparing them with sensible and material objects, easily perceived. It is based on symbolism, harmony, the universal hierarchy.

All created beings resemble one another to some extent, and are bound together in a relationship, an affinity, more or less close. The entire universe bears the stamp and the image of God, the source of all things; just as, within the universe, the least things bear the stamp and image of the greatest. The body is made in the image of the soul, instinct gives a presage of liberty. Material nature is the symbol of the spiritual world: the sky is symbolic of the glory of God; space of his immensity; the wind is his Spirit, light his beauty; and time, ever-changing, changeless eternity.

The more comprehensive the mind, and the better able to embrace the entirety of things, so much the more clearly it perceives unity in apparent diversity, and so much the more it excels in comparison.

Human nature, that unites in its complexity all the elements, all the kingdoms, and all the worlds, is especially endowed with the faculty of perceiving analogies and resemblances. God sees all things in the unity of his Word, which has produced all things; the immaterial mind contemplates all things in ideas, which are simple and precious in proportion as it is itself elevated; the man of feeling and imagination comprehends the divine, the spiritual, the invisible, only through the symbol of material reality; he divines God by the creation in which God is reflected, spirits by his own soul, and his soul by the matter which it animates and on which it stamps its image.

Considered thus, the art of the parable is no longer a Jewish specialty, it is the setting to work of human intelligence and its normal course of action.

The broadest field opened to allegory is offered by the relation between God and the creation, between the soul and God. Certain peoples, as the Hindoos and the Greeks, are in this respect behind the Semites and the Jews, because the former, confounding by their pantheism the creation with God, have lost sight of their just relations, while the latter, in maintaining a strict distinction between them, have kept intact the exhaustless treasure of their analogies. While the poetry of the former has degenerated into monstrous and absurd legends, that of the latter has preserved the healthy and vigorous energy of truth. They did not give the world the attributes of God: they comprehended the littleness of the great universe; they discerned, in its nothingness, the unfathomable grandeurs of the infinite.

In adopting the form of the parable, Jesus penetrated the very law of human intelligence, the law which best responds to the nature of the Master, as well as to that of the disciples. But these laws being immutable, they communicate their immutability to the forms which they consecrate.

Hence, among other causes, the eternal youth of the parables of the Gospels.

The parable, considered in itself, is perfect in proportion as it is correct and profound. Correctness depends upon the symbol chosen, profundity upon the truth concealed under the symbol. The more close the resemblance between the symbol and the truth symbolized, the more exact the parable. The profounder the truth symbolized, the sublimer the parable. Jesus, in his discourse to the people, has disdained vain poetry, and the search after striking images; he adhered to simplicity and unity of treatment, choosing the most familiar objects as symbols of the truth. The sublimity of the doctrine thus contrasts with the humility of the symbol. There is no pomp, no false splendour; all is simplicity. This is the only vesture in which he has chosen to clothe the holy nudity of the Spirit. He does not desire to fix the attention by the external form, the symbol: he puts aside all that could charm or distract. Men of the greatest intellect often conceal the truth, and sometimes disfigure it, by overloading it with borrowed ornament. Jesus reveals it while he seems to hide it; for the veil in which he wraps it, allows the outlines of its form to appear in all their purity. Thus, while the deathless words of the man of genius often please only our aesthetic sense, the chosen simplicity of

Jesus repels the profane and engenders, in upright hearts knowledge and virtue.

One of the greatest gifts of the orator, especially of the popular orator, is tact, without which all his power, and all his vehemence of action, remain fruitless. It is not enough to interpret truth to a people, it is necessary to adapt it to the consciousness of that people. An excess of light dazzles ; he who does not know how to temper the light blinds instead of enlightening. The tact of eloquence is inspired by the love of truth and by the love of mankind. He who loves truth more than he loves himself, seeks to make it triumph, and does not expose it by revealing it indiscreetly, to indifference or contempt ; and he who loves men divines their weaknesses, and makes allowance for them, communicating to them only so much as they can understand.

The method observed by Jesus in teaching the people shows his exquisite prudence. He who came into this world to bear witness to the Truth, loved it even unto death. His every word breathes discretion and moderation. He never threw pearls before swine, nor gave that which is holy unto the dogs. His love for his people, for his country, for the race that he desired to redeem, shines on every page of his life. He knew their weakness, their prejudices, their ignorance, their hardness, their incapacity ; and he had compassion for them. He was patient, for he knew that his Gospel and his doctrine, destined to enlighten coming ages, would require ages to penetrate the minds of men and regenerate the world.

But however great may be the weakness of mankind, however sublime may be the truth, there yet exist between them indestructible affinities. They attract each other ; and if man be unable to raise himself to the truth, the truth will come down to man. As God was incarnate in the Man Jesus, so eternal Truth became incarnate in the parables that proceeded from his mouth. But in the same way that God incarnate is the better loved and comprehended, so likewise divine Truth is sweeter and more comprehensible in the parables. Even the ignorant can understand them, and Jesus has found the secret, by their means, of teaching the mysteries of God to the lowest of the children of men.

This art of tempering the brightness of the True is one of the rules of divine government. God did not wish to crush man with overwhelming evidence; he lets his rays fall with a mild lustre, in order to inspire faith, while respecting the freedom of the will. Christ, his great work, is instinct with this mysterious character; the Spirit with which he is filled shrouds itself under the veil of humanity.

The disciples wondered at the mystery in which the Master, in addressing the multitude, always enveloped his teaching. The cause of this disguise they did not perceive. It is seldom that the wisdom of God does not shock the reason of the man who dares to judge it by his own light.

"Why speakest thou unto them in parables," they said to Jesus when they were alone, "while to us thou speakest without images?"[1]

It may be that this question was inspired by zeal. The disciples must have desired the glory of the Lord, and in their impatience they may have wished to behold him dazzle and enthral the multitude by the splendour of his teaching.

Jesus answered them: "To you who believe, to you who love me, it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of heaven; to them who will not believe, to them who are without, it is not given." Their attention is attracted by the symbol, "therefore speak I to them in parables." To believe is the beginning of wisdom; to doubt is the cause of spiritual darkness.

"To him that hath," this beginning of wisdom, "shall be given in full measure; and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have."

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[1] Matthew xiii. 10-17.

Faith attracts the gifts of God, but unbelief dries up the source from which they spring. Once abandoned to himself, once deprived of the divine strength by which our life is multiplied an hundredfold, our virtues fructify, our whole nature is ennobled, man plunges little by little into error, which is the death of reason, and into vice, which is the death of the soul; the mind is darkened, the heart is oppressed, the will is weakened, the conscience is rendered stubborn.

"Therefore it is," adds Jesus, "that I speak in figures, so that those who are unworthy, seeing shall perceive not, and hearing shall hear and understand not. I fulfil thus the word of Isaiah, prophesying to this people, You shall hear with your ears, and shall not understand; and seeing, you shall see and shall not perceive. For the heart of this people is grown gross, and their ears have grown dull of hearing; and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."[1]

This is an appalling sentence.

It is no longer the vengeance of God; it is his love that this people fear; they fear to see, fear to hear, fear to understand, fear to be converted, fear to be healed by God; therefore it is that they shut their eyes and turn away from him.

Evil must be attended by its fatal consequences. When man in his obstinacy has reached a certain point of degradation, he seems no longer worthy of conversion: God, his mercy exhausted, leaves him to himself, and the most terrible punishment of the sinner who has so long provoked him is the hardening of the heart against the last appeals which save those predestined to salvation.

But even the hardened and the stiff-necked are sometimes overcome by goodness. Even such as have crucified Christ or massacred his disciples, can fall vanquished at their feet, and be regenerate by the merits of their blood, for the love of God is a fire which renders the soul malleable, though it were as hard as granite. However heavy the hand of divine justice may press upon the human race, the last word of the divine government is not justice, but mercy.

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[1] Isaiah vi. 9-10.

It was in this spirit that Jesus added:

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

"For verily I say unto you, Many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear and have not heard them."

Incomprehensible in the mouth of man, these words are natural from the lips of Jesus; they express the consciousness which he had of his divinity; those who see him are blessed; those who hear him are enlightened.

We can imagine how close must have been the intimacy among the Twelve, gathered around the Master in the upper room, when at night, the multitude having dispersed, Jesus, resting from his labours, opened to them treasures of wisdom and holiness of which the world knew not.

In the confidence of this peaceful hour he opened to them his heart. No profane or indifferent intruder, no stranger was a restraint upon their intercourse. The disciples could ask all things, and Jesus could tell them all things; he allowed those simple and unsophisticated souls to see into his heart, and, as one of the Evangelists says, he explained to them everything; his condescension was, like his tenderness, boundless; it had the patience of a father.

When he had spoken he would ask his disciples: "Have ye understood all these things?" and they, entranced, would answer: "Yea, Lord."[1]

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[1] Matt. xiii. 51-52.

One day, speaking of their calling him Master, he said to them:

"The true Scribe who has a knowledge of the Kingdom of heaven is like the master of a house who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old."

He understands the wants of his children and supplies them. Human knowledge is poor and weak, at times harsh; it has the key neither to our past nor our future. To the mind hungering after eternal truth it has no nourishment to offer; and if for a moment it can distract a suffering heart, it has never consoled one. It is absorbed in the study of the phenomena which mark the changing face of this world; and though it may attain to a perception of a first cause, it can never elevate to it our restless and unquiet nature.

He who has been initiated into the knowledge of God learns from it the law, and the aim and the end of all things; he views all things in relation to the eternal; he knows that God is preparing his Kingdom among men, and that since the days of the first human pair, through all time and space, in the midst of all the turmoils of families, peoples, civilizations, races, in the sanguinary chaos of interests, passions, doctrines, religions, the living and loving Spirit accomplishes and continues its work of salvation, of truth and of goodness, of justice and of mercy, of love and of peace; he knows that this Spirit has had its full and complete manifestation in Jesus, and that Jesus, the hope of the past, the sign that everywhere is spoken against in the present, is the reserve force of the future, the completion of the work of God.

Christ is the divine treasure on which mankind may draw without ceasing; like all things which are eternal, he is at once old and new; he responds to all that has been, all that is, all that will be: he possesses the key to the past, to the present, and to the future. Ask of him truth, and he will teach it; vital strength, and he will communicate it; consolation and he will pour it upon you abundantly; hope, and he will make it dawn before you; bliss, and a very outcast though you be, he will give you a foretaste of its ineffable sweetness.

Man has no longer the right to complain; his destiny is a noble one. What matter his miseries and his wants! it is sweet to feel their stimulus, for there is one to relieve and supply them. What he sought with most ardour and most anguish, what was for ever escaping him; life and happiness, life which fears no death, true happiness, which trial does but augment; these priceless benefits are henceforth within his reach; it depends only upon himself to ask them from Jesus, to live and be happy.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUPREME INSULT OF THE PHARISEES.

PUBLIC preaching by the lake marked the culminating point of the apostolic work in Galilee.

In a few weeks the whole mass of the country was stirred; nothing could neutralise the divine influence of the new Prophet. The crowd, in spite of its prejudices, could no longer resist, when brought face to face with the power of his word, the number and splendour of his cures and miracles. Convinced by what it saw, it proclaimed in Jesus the Son of David, greeting him by the title of the expected Messiah. From all parts, those who sought the Prophet, flocked to Capernaum, which became illustrious among the little towns of Zebulun and Naphtali.

But in proportion as the movement spread among the people, all the evil passions which are stirred up at the coming of a man of God, spite, jealousy, uneasiness, offence, threats, insult, and hatred, gathered strength among the chiefs, the elders, the scribes and the Pharisees. Jerusalem, which remained the centre of the opposition, never lost sight of the movement nor of him who caused it. Emissaries were sent by the Sanhedrin with the command to keep watch over Jesus and to undeceive the crowd.

But a popular movement cannot be stopped by a few doctors; even force does not always succeed. Those who possess power and employ it in the service of a worn-out tradition, never rightly estimate either the forces which they are fighting against or those which they employ, and their illusions are the cause of their fall.

It seems that it was the standing order to speak slightingly of Jesus, and to compromise him in public opinion. Calumny is the favourite weapon of hatred; it delights to insult while waiting to destroy.

The Pharisees of Galilee, like those of Jerusalem, could not dispute the extraordinary power of the word of Jesus, nor cast doubt upon the prodigious miracles, the fame of which resounded on all sides: the healing of those who were sick, the raising from the dead, and the casting out of devils. They did not even dream of doing so. If they had been sincere they would have followed the example of the people and added their acclamations to theirs; but to acknowledge Jesus was to condemn themselves; to hail in him the messenger of God was to abdicate.

No religious power has ever given an example of generous, spontaneous renunciation. It has always been necessary that God should let loose upon it the torrent of events which shall carry it away.

It was then that the Pharisees hurled against Jesus, in the crowd, the most cruel insult and the most odious blasphemy.[1]

"It is not God that is in him," said they, "it is the devil. The spirit of evil directs him, and in the name of Beelzebub he casts out devils."

They had already called him a friend of publicans and sinners, a man who rejected their observances, a lover of wine and of good living, a Sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer, and one who despised the ancient teachers; now they say he is a magician, one possessed of a devil. Jesus remained calm, he asserted the truth in all its intensity; but he replied to the insult with terrible severity. A more inexorable word never fell from his lips, to repulse outrage and to denounce hypocrisy.

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[1] Matt. xii. 24-45; Mark iii. 22-30.

"And he called them to him, and said unto them in parables: How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.[1] And every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.[2] And if Satan rise up against himself and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.[3] And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.[4]

"And if I act by the Spirit of God," he seemed to say, "he who is not with me is against the Spirit of God; and he who does not gather in this Spirit can only scatter abroad. The Spirit is the bond of all things." Then, raising his voice, he added these terrible words: "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."[5]

There are irremissible faults, "an everlasting sin."[6] Blasphemous insults and calumnies against the Son of Man, such as calling him a wine-bibber, an impious person, a Samaritan, are offences that may be forgiven ; but to attribute to the Evil One his Godlike works and miracles, and thereby to outrage the Holy Ghost working in Christ, this is blasphemy which may neither be excused nor forgiven.

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[1] St. Mark iii, 23, 24.
[2] St. Matth. xii, 25.
[3] St. Mark iii, 26.
[4] St. Matth. xii, 27–30.
[5] St. Mark iii, 28, 29.
[6] St. Mark iii, 29 (Douay version).

By the teaching of Jesus and by rigorous justice, sin is only remitted by God, by his Spirit of pity, love, and goodness. Every man who does not reject this Spirit, however weak, erring, and sinful he may be ; every man who does not say of God "He is evil," and of the work of Jesus "It is the work of evil, darkness, and oppression," may yet be gathered into the fold and saved. But the man who, by an act of sacrilegious presumption, puts himself in opposition to the Spirit, who rejects it by blasphemy and obstinate hatred, that man wilfully closes for himself the only way by which pardon might reach him. He, as it were, hermetically seals his mind and forbids the approach of God, who is ever ready to pardon. The outraged Spirit withdraws, leaving the blasphemer to his "eternal sin." When death, which separates time from eternity, strikes him, there is no change, for death perpetuates both the good and the evil ; to the one, as to the other, it sets the seal of eternity.

Let the weak take comfort, and those who have wandered from the right path be filled with hope, for, even at the eleventh hour, they may receive mercy if they ask for it. But only the avenging justice of God awaits those who, far from invoking this mercy, outrage its very principle. It will lie heavy upon them ; and the infinite goodness which they have spurned will no longer be able to avert it, and with it eternal wrath and condemnation.

Jesus reminds his insulters of the most simple laws of wisdom and reason, and penetrating, as usual, the very secrets of their hearts, he shows them why they transgress these laws, and declares openly the hidden source of their blasphemy. As "the tree is known by its fruit," he cried, "so is the heart of man revealed by his works. A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit, nor a corrupt tree good fruit." My works are good, they could not proceed from Beelzebub. The devil is evil, he could not bring forth good works.

"O generation of vipers, how can ye speak good things?" That which you see and hear does not move your stubborn hearts, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." But account must be given of every word spoken, even the idle words, at the day of judgment. "Your words will justify you or they will condemn you." Some words are quite as criminal as deeds, for they give offence, they scandalise, they corrupt, and they kill; those of the Pharisees, to which Jesus refers here, are like the viper's sting. There is no doubt that they influenced the crowd which heard them, and those to whom the enemies of Jesus reported them. Those who were indifferent or hostile to the general enthusiasm welcomed them, and it was among these that calumny made its way and did its fatal work.

Some regarded the extreme earnestness of the Master as fanaticism, and his work as madness. The sublimity of his teaching was beyond them. His constant activity in preaching the word, the thronging of the crowd around him, the nights spent in prayer, the days in healing the sick, his house assailed so that he could with difficulty find time to take food; in a word, his whole existence so instinct with the Spirit, and so far removed from commonplace conditions: all these things were little understood.

He was blamed even by his own family, and some of his brethren boldly treated him as a madman, a demoniac, a fanatic.[1]

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[1] Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 19-20.

They wished to draw him away from the crowd, and to take him with them far from the uproar, where, as they said he was beside himself.

A short time after the violent scene, when Jesus treated the emissaries of the Sanhedrin with all the indignation of a man deeply wounded on those points which he held most sacred, the people pushed into the house which the emissaries had just left and sat round him. The earnest faith of these lowly men comforted him, after the blasphemy of the great and their arrogant science. It is to be remarked as a law in the life of Jesus, and one which has prevailed ever since, that every insult offered by those men who are led away by their reason and by hatred, calls forth in the people an increase of love and confidence.

The joy of the Master was to see his Spirit shine forth. He felt it to the full when they came and said to him, "Master, behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee."

We may feel sure, that the mother of Jesus was not one of those who judged him in their miserable wisdom; we must suppose that her solicitude for her son led her to him, to comfort him in the struggles of his apostolic work. Jesus replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" and, looking around on those which sat about him, he said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall listen to the word of God and do his will, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother."

Ties of blood did not exist for the Son of Man: human relationship was immaterial. Just as the earthly family is constituted by the unity of the same blood running in our veins, so the heavenly family is constituted by the unity of the same Spirit pervading our souls. Jesus does not belong to the earth: born of the Spirit, and filled with it, he is the founder of the great family of the sons of God, and so, even if one should be of the same blood as he, one can only become his mother, his brother, or his sister, by participating in the fulness of his Spirit. All those who have been impelled by a higher inspiration, and those who, subjugated by God's call, have dedicated their whole life to his service, will understand without difficulty these words of Jesus.

Every strong conviction ends by taking possession of us; it overcomes and absorbs us, and tears us ruthlessly from everything else; it becomes our sole object, and outside it nothing seems to touch us; those who do not understand it are strangers to us; those who attack it are our enemies; those who love and serve it with us are our true, our only family.

On the evening of one of the days when Jesus had taught the people in parables[1] on the shores of the lake, he said suddenly to his disciples, "Let us pass over unto the other side."[2]

The events which were about to occur seemed arranged by Providence to confirm the faith of the disciples, by making the sovereign power of Jesus shine forth. The more he is attacked by men, the more does the Father exalt the glory of his Son and reassure those who share his destiny.

The disciples obeyed; they sent away the crowd of listeners who were sitting on the shore, set sail, and took Jesus even as he was in the ship. Other little ships were also with them. A great tempest arose, and the wind drove the waves into the ship, so that it began to fill. But he was in the hinder part of the ship asleep with his head upon a pillow. The disciples, terrified by the storm, awoke him: "Master, save us! we perish.

"Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" said Jesus to them.

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[1] Mark iv. 35.

[2] Mark iv. 35, etc.; Matt. viii. 18-27; Luke viii. 22-25.

Then he arose, and as if nature were animated by some mysterious spirit, he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: "Peace, be still."

At his word the wind and the waves were stilled, and there was a great calm.

"How is it that ye have no faith?" said Jesus to his disciples. They were seized with fear; and, looking at one another, they said with wonder mixed with terror: "What manner of man is this? He commands the wind and the sea, and they obey him."

Jesus, in this miraculous act, reveals by his power his divine nature. His word has sovereign might and authority; it derives nothing from others, and brings about all that it commands. Nature, even in its most tumultuous phases, obeys him like a docile and intelligent servant. He commanded the wind to be silent, and it was silent; the raging waves to cease from troubling, and they were still. A man gifted with such power is no longer a man, he has the strength of God. Those who shrink from this conclusion deny the fact; but the denial is confronted with the unimpeachable testimony of the sacred writings. The divine personality of him whose life we are following, has nothing of our littleness of nature; whether he commands the sea, or whether he teaches the Beatitudes, he has always a divine grandeur, for he manifests always the power or the wisdom of God.

Such acts, we can readily understand, exerted a great influence on his disciples. Their faith took root, the idea which they had formed of their Master was gradually exalted, and with their faith they felt their admiration and their devotion grow. Nothing less would have sufficed to detach their hearts from the adverse influences which surrounded them. Miracles were a part of the education of the first faithful followers of Jesus, they are one of the forces which explain their rapid conversion; they impress themselves on the mind, and form an essential feature of the Gospel narrative.

The ship, with Jesus and his disciples on board, assailed by wind and waves, Jesus asleep in the hinder part of the vessel, the terrified disciples crying to their Master, "Save us, we perish!" he, always calm, in the midst of the tempest, reproaching them for their fear, as if one could ever fear so near to him; his word more powerful even than the raging storm and sea, commanding the wind to be silent and the waves to be calm; the sudden, complete, absolute tranquillity which followed; and the admiration mixed with fear, prompting the cry of faith in him who is stronger than nature: this whole incident, with its vivid details, has become a popular symbol of the work of Jesus. The Church is Peter's ship, which bears Christ and his disciples. It will go, on the evening of the last day, to the eternal shore, crossing this world where the tempest rages. Jesus, unseen, seems to be asleep, prayer awakes and arouses him; he shows himself and grieves that we should have been afraid; his presence is the pledge of our peace. He can command events as well as the tempest and the waves, he can control them whenever he will with an all-powerful word. From the sea which he calms there rises a cry of adoration, and by it we may track the course of the ship through the silence of the world.

Jesus has the strength of God; he is the master of human passions and of their angry waves, which have no power to sink the Church of God.

The ship, after the tempest, reached without further difficulty the eastern shore where Jesus wished to disembark.[1] He landed in the country of the Gerasenes, a little beyond the ancient Gerasa.[1] This small town, situated at one end of the Wady Es-Semak, was part of Decapolis. The mountains of the valley extend on the right and on the left, and rise precipitously above the lake to the height of the plateaux of Gaulonitis. They are pierced with caves which are used as tombs. The ruins of Gerasa remain under the name of Kersa. The old basalt walls of the tumbled-down houses, levelled to the ground, are still to be distinguished.

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[1] Matt. viii. 28, etc.; Mark v. 1-10; Luke viii. 26, etc.

The ruins of a castle, which guarded the road to the shore of the lake, in front of Kersa, form a little hill which is covered by the bushy branches of a sturdy terebinth. Bedouins encamp around, their black tents spread in the midst of the green grass ; their flocks wander about the valley and on the hillsides.

At the very moment when Jesus went ashore, immediately there came to him, out of the tombs which cover the hills, a man of terrible aspect.[2] He lived among the tombs ; no man could bind him, not even with chains; he was the terror of the whole country. Though often bound with chains, and his feet in irons, he had always plucked asunder the chains and broken the irons in pieces, and without resting, he wandered day and night on the lonely mountains and in the tombs, crying, tearing his garments, and cutting himself with stones.

This violent madness was aggravated by demoniac possession. The whole story is otherwise inexplicable. Seeing Jesus coming from afar, he ran to him, fell down before him, and crying with a loud voice, he said, " What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God ? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not." It was not the madman who spoke, it was the evil spirit with which he was possessed revealing itself. The attitude of the evil spirit towards Jesus is always the same ; a superior force seems to impel the evil spirit to him. It recognised the Son of God in this

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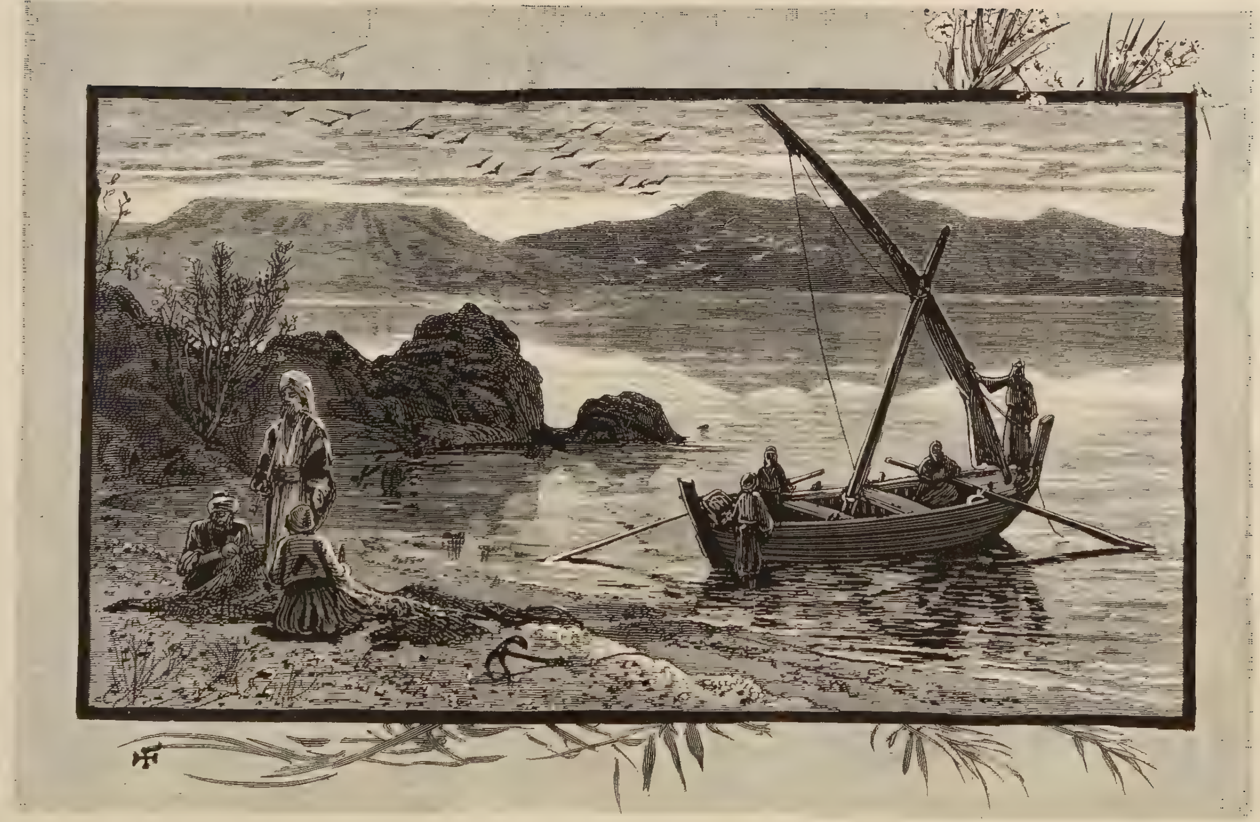
[1] See Appendix L : *Kersa and Gadara.*

[2] See Appendix K : *The Demoniac of Kersa.*



ON THE SHORE OF THE LAKE, AT ET TÂBIGHAH, THE SUPPOSED SITE OF BETHSAIDA.

An oleander in full bloom grows among the rocks, and storks are characteristically hovering over the lake.

extraordinary man; it felt itself already conquered and enchained: it did not blaspheme, it asked for mercy.

These words throw a little light upon the mystery of the lost spirits. Their satanic joy is in the evil which they can do. The nothingness of their nature from which they have expelled God is their torment. To escape from themselves to enslave man and to trouble the earth would be a solace and a diversion in the terrible void to which they are condemned to be thrown back again upon themselves, upon that Ego which, without God, can only be dark, hideous, feeble, empty, this is what is meant by their imprisonment in the abyss.

Jesus did not speak to this wretched man, he replied to the evil spirit. He wishes first to deliver the soul, and when the soul is freed he will save the body.

"Unclean spirit," said he to him, "come out of this man. What is thy name?"

"Legion," said the spirit,[1] and renewing his entreaties he besought Jesus not to send him away out of the country.

Jesus did not answer.

Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. "Send us into the swine," cried the spirits by the mouth of the demoniac, "that we may enter into them." Jesus gave them leave. As he had, that same night, mastered the powers of nature, by calming the wind and the waves, he seemed in this exorcism to have more than ever the power to subdue spirits; he spoke to them with a voice they could not resist, they went whithersoever he willed.

At a sign from Jesus, the unclean spirits went out of the man and entered into the swine, and the herd of about two thousand ran violently down a steep place into the sea and were drowned.

[1] This name, which called to mind the conquest and the domination of the Jewish people by the Roman armies, expressed vigorously the tyranny exerted on man by the evil spirits, whose power over him cannot be measured.

It has been asked by what right Jesus inflicted this loss on the Gerasenes. Does not everything belong to God and to him who exercises his authority? The same hand which lets loose plagues and the powers of death upon the terrified earth, unchains also the evil spirits which ravage the human world. But in proving and in chastising us, it raises us, for with its power it makes us feel our own insignificance and the sovereignty of God.

The animal world, with its varied forms, mysterious in their variety, is merely a vast hieroglyph, where the realities of the invisible world, of the soul and the spirit, may be deciphered. There are striking affinities between the forms and instincts of animals and the psychical characteristics of men. Many men, the cringing, the tortuous, the unclean, have among the fauna an exact prototype. The swine, invaded by devils, represent those evil and corrupt powers whose temptations during centuries have succeeded in transforming the human race into a herd of the sty of Epicurus.

They that fed the swine fled, terrified, and told what they had seen in the city and in the country. At this news many ran to Jesus, and they saw the man who was possessed of the devil sitting at his feet, clothed and in his right mind

The Gerasenes at this touching sight had only one feeling, that of fear; only one thought, the loss of their swine. Such coarse and selfish natures could not understand him who had just landed on their territory. We do not know whether they were Jews or Gentiles, for Decapolis had a very mixed population. They could find nothing to say to the mysterious guest who had healed the demoniac; they were afraid of him. The man of God often disconcerts those whom he visits. They would rather not be disturbed in their earthly career, in the unreal calm of the reign of the passions.

Instead of offering hospitality to Jesus, they dismissed him, timidly praying him to depart from their coasts. Jesus, who had respect for all men, even in their blindness and misery, would never thrust himself upon anyone. He returned to the shore and departed.

And when he was come into the ship, the man whom he had healed prayed him that he might follow him. He felt himself powerfully drawn to his deliverer; it seemed to him that his life should be dedicated to him: such inspiration is possible to gratitude. The Master did not accede to his wishes, but, touched by his faith, he made an apostle even of this man, who had been violently possessed of a devil.

"Go home," said he, "to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he hath had compassion on thee."

In Galilee, where Jesus was always so careful not to arouse popular excitement, he forbade those whom he healed to publish abroad their cure; but in this country, where he was only making a short stay, and which he was about to leave so hastily, he wished that his name should remain after him, and that the outcasts of the Gerasenes should not be entire strangers to the work of deliverance which God was accomplishing for his people.[1] All who have been saved by the mercy of God hear, sounding deep within their conscience, these words of Jesus. Nothing has more power to touch others than the witness of him who has himself received the benefits of God. Gratitude opens the heart, and the heart possesses the secret of moving and convincing others. This poor Gerasene departed and published throughout Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him, and the name of the Prophet became the object of universal admiration.[2]

This account of the healing of the demoniac of Kersa, given in the second Gospel without any attempt to tone down either its colour or its marvellous details, is not a subject of difficulty to those who admit the reality of demoniac possession and the sovereign power of Jesus over spirits ; it is, on the contrary, a precious fact from two points of view, for it reveals, with startling clearness, the nature of possession by evil spirits and the invincible authority of Jesus.

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[1] Cf. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke*, ad. h. l.

[2] Luke viii. 36.

The would-be rational school of German theology, whose only care is to attenuate the truth in order to render it acceptable, and to torture the texts to adapt them to its views, can only see in the demoniac of Kersa a man afflicted with lycanthropy ; in the impetuous descent of the swine, a herd frightened by the demoniac and by the cries of the shepherds ; in the healing of the man possessed a magnetic influence possessed by Jesus, whose charm and nobility impressed itself even upon madmen. History, seriously treated, does not permit such fancies, the superficial audacity of which is but a poor disguise for the coward thought beneath. Those who do not believe in a personal God, in spirits, in their influence upon man, and in the divine mission of Jesus, have no other resource than to treat the Gospel as a legend, and the Evangelists as ignorant men ; but even they must halt before the greatness of Jesus. The Master, whose moral teaching has never been approached, who astonished and still astonishes the whole civilised world by his divine wisdom, who conquered all the narrow prejudices and the gross ignorance by which he was surrounded, cannot be dismissed by a few philosophers.

If he taught the existence of devils, it was because devils exist ; if he expelled them, it was because he possessed the strength of God to bind them and to cast them out ; he never sanctioned error or evil, and it is an outrage to his integrity to apply to him a system of accommodation, which assumes that he outwardly adopted the erroneous doctrines and the childish credulity of the crowd. The personality of Jesus protects the weakness of those who have written of him ; to challenge them is to challenge him ; to attack them is to attack him ; his holiness and wisdom render both him and his disciples invulnerable.

No negative criticism, supported by a pantheist philosophy or a wholly material science, will ever affect him who has conquered the world, and whose teaching remains, after two thousand years, the law of virtue and of heroism.

Jesus left the country of the Gerasenes on the morning of his arrival there, and returned to Capernaum. The approach of the ship, which had left the evening before, was seen from afar, and the crowd assembled to receive him. They were all waiting for him, says one Evangelist.[1]

The account of the tempest, stilled that very night, and of the healing of the demoniac, would naturally spread among the people. But the marvels which seemed to spring up in his every footstep were no longer much regarded. Jesus only passed through the town, and left immediately for Nazareth,[2] followed by his disciples. He wished to see again his own country, where he had tried some weeks before to preach the Gospel, at the beginning of his ministry in Galilee, and which he had left under excommunication, and threats of death.[3] The Nazarenes had blasphemed in him the Son of Man : he forgot the insult, and with characteristic gentleness, he made a new and generous attempt to enlighten them. The prejudices by which he had been repelled would perhaps vanish before his now well recognized fame.

He showed himself in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. The old fierceness of feeling and violence of hatred seemed to have abated. Many, even on hearing him, were amazed and filled with admiration ; they did not deny his wisdom nor his miracles, but the humbleness of his origin was the stumbling-block of their faith. This they regarded as an objection to his divine mission. How, said they, is not he the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and of Joseph, of Judas and of Simon? and are not his sisters among us? What world-wide distances may separate the impressions and judgments of mankind! The very lowliness of birth, which is now held only to set off and augment the merit of a great man, was among the Galilaeans of Nazareth the greatest bar to it. Perhaps they would have accepted Jesus merely as a teacher on a level with the others, but they could not recognize him as the messenger of God, as the Messiah. They were blinded with envy which they concealed under the Pharisees' sophism against Jesus: Will the Messiah come of so low degree, will a carpenter deliver the people and restore the throne of David? Even the very family of Jesus did not avoid this offence; the superiority of an extraordinary man is almost always misunderstood by those who have lived in familiar intercourse with him.

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[1] Luke viii. 40.

[2] Matt. xiii. 53-58 ; Mark vi. 1-6 ; cf. Luke iv. 16, etc.

[3] See Appendix N : *The Two Visits to Nazareth.*

Jesus was astonished and grieved at the obstinate incredulity of his countrymen. His goodness, which faith alone could bring into operation, remained for them for ever sealed; he only healed there a few rare suppliants on whom he laid his hands. He left Nazareth which he would never see again, and in taking leave of his compatriots, whose coldness contrasted with the enthusiastic welcome which he had received elsewhere from the people, he said sorrowfully to them these words, which pourtray his whole destiny: "A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and among his own kin and in his own house."

A Nazarene, he was despised by the Nazarenes; a Jew, he was rejected by the Jews; but the Samaritans and the Gentiles welcomed and adored him.

CHAPTER VIII.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE TWELVE. DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

THE disciples of Jesus were the constant object of his solicitude during the whole time in which he preached the Gospel in Galilee, where he was so well received by the people, but denounced by the Pharisees. They formed his Church and his Kingdom. Their number had increased, and from them he made a selection; he chose twelve, whom he called apostles. He had shown them, as he promised in words full of mystery, the angels of God ascending and descending upon his head; he had taken them with him on the apostolic journeys; and now, feeling them to be worthy of a higher confidence, he wished them to go forth and preach the Gospel, and to begin under his eyes the apprenticeship, as it were, to their apostolate.

The mission of the Twelve to the very midst of the Jewish towns would, Jesus felt, extend his own work. His days were numbered, and it was necessary that, notwithstanding the briefness of his own career, the whole people should hear the good news of his name and his Kingdom. The harvest is ripe, and the number of the labourers is increased.

Jesus summoned the Twelve to his presence;[1] the sacred writings do not clearly define the place of meeting. It was probably that same upper chamber in Peter's house at Capernaum where the Master and his disciples were wont to meet in the evening after the fatigues of his days entirely spent in the fulfilment of God's work.

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[1] Matt. x. 1; Mark vi. 7; Luke ix. 1.

He began, as a wise diplomatist, by limiting their field of action: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

By thus restricting the sphere of activity, the Master lightened the work and adapted it to the capacity of the workers. It was besides the plan of God. Israel, which had the promises of salvation, ought to have its first-fruits; the time would come later for the Gentiles and the Samaritans. Then he added: "As ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand."

This contains, in a word, the whole teaching of the apostles. No part of their teaching was more sublime or more necessary: this implies everything; all else, without this, is useless, and it is the special teaching of Jesus. He had already announced this in his addresses in the synagogues, in his parables to the people, and above all in familiar intercourse; and though they were far from gauging its depth, they knew enough to say that the Kingdom of God was the Kingdom of the Messiah, that the Messiah was there, that they knew him and were his disciples, and that the necessary condition for becoming one of his Kingdom was to repent and to believe.

Apostolic work has remained what Jesus made it on this day, when, for the first time, he sent forth a few chosen men to work in his name. The Kingdom of God is always at hand; the supreme duty, the highest destiny of man, is always to receive into his heart the living and personal Spirit of God, of which Jesus is the only source; the condition of receiving this generous gift is still faith in the word of Jesus, renunciation of ourselves, of our own ideas, passions, interests, vices, even of our own good qualities; in a word, complete repentance and complete sacrifice.

These new warriors needed a new armour.

"I give you," said Jesus, "power and authority over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease."

These words are evidently divine. It is in the power of man to impart ideas, commands, plans and ambitions, and to kindle in the souls of his disciples the sacred fire of enthusiasm, but he cannot transmit either his genius or his virtue. Not one of the greatest men in philosophy, politics, or religion, whom we read of in history, has ever laid claim to such a power. But Jesus transmits to his disciples the Spirit of God, which is in him and of him, and he sends them forth armed with these words:

"Go, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils."

The apostles in their ministry will have no other strength but the power of God, and this power will only be given them for the good of man. By it they will soothe the pain of those who suffer, restore the weary, give life to the dead, and freedom to those who are under the yoke of the evil spirit. Miracles of mercy will be the sign of their mission and the proof of their power. They will follow the example of their Master; his Spirit will work in them and by them. Their faith will incorporate them with him, and will remain the condition of their superhuman activity. The power to heal physical ills and to command death may be suspended, but the power to influence souls and the authority over evil spirits will never fail. After all it is a matter of small importance that the body suffers and dies if the soul lives, healthy, free, and comforted.

Jesus continued his Messianic functions by his apostolic work, a work of deliverance, justice, and infinite mercy, which draws men's minds away from those evil doctrines which oppress and debase them, which quickens the dead conscience, gives the comfort of God to those who despair, and heals the troubles and infirmities which impede the world's progress.

At the same time that Jesus gave his apostles the strength of the Spirit, he pointed out what virtues he demanded from them: the kindness which is ready to sacrifice itself, the unselfishness which forgets itself, the poverty which forsakes all, the confidence which places absolute trust in God, the perseverance and courage which nothing can disturb. "Freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor any money in your purses; nor scrip for your journey; neither two coats; neither shoes, but only sandals; with no staff but that of the traveller;[1] for the workman is worthy of his meat."

This is a picture of an apostle, such as Jesus would have him. He who has received everything from God should give freely, and imitate the generosity of God. His worth is nothing without the Divine munificence of which he is the object; that which he has received for nothing he should give for nothing. The Spirit can neither be bought nor sold. He who receives it is happy; he who imparts it still happier. This increase of joy will be his treasure, and will suffice for his reward.

Expansiveness is in proportion to goodness. The best people are the most open-hearted. Of all forces the Spirit of God is the most easily imparted. Those who radiate their goodness make themselves loved, and by opening themselves to others they encourage confidence in return. This is the most valuable gift for an apostle.

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[1] According to St. Matthew, Jesus forbids the staff and shoes. According to St. Mark, he permits and allows them. The reconciliation of the two texts, which are apparently contradictory, is easy. The staff which is forbidden is evidently the *matah*, which indicates an object that may be used for defence or offence; the one which is allowed is the traveller's staff, the *maschan*. Both meanings are implied in the ῥαβδον of the Greeks. As to the shoes, those which are permitted are the sandais worn by the poor. Cf. Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae*, ad. h. l.

As he is generous he will be disinterested. He should have no earthly cares, for what has he to do with the riches of this world? He possesses the incorruptible treasures of God. In seeing him thus regardless of those things which pass away, men will understand that he lives by those things which do not pass away; his poverty will help to make them understand the reality of those imperishable treasures of the Kingdom which is announced to them. He need not disquiet himself about the necessaries of life, for God has ordered all things so that the workman who is worthy of his meat shall always find it. The useless man will disappear, but he who does good work is worthy to live, and he will live by the Providence of the Father.

The soul of Jesus overflowed with this filial confidence; he wished his apostles to be filled with it, for it is the expression of the love for the heavenly Father, whose name and whose goodness he had revealed to them.

The apostle should live by the gifts of those to whom he preaches the Gospel; that is all that he will receive, all that he will ask. Gratitude from those whom he heals and saves will not be wanting. Terrestrial benefits may be received with ingratitude; the gifts of God, never: the former do not make men better; the latter sanctify them.

Jesus instructed these members of the Church militant even to the smallest details of their method of warfare. In this first attempt to preach the Word, he did not wish them to go alone, but two and two, so that the one should sustain the other.[1]

He did not send them either to the public assemblies of the synagogues or to the multitude. He feared for them, still timid and inexperienced as they were, the perils of a clamorous and stirring apostolate; he knew the vehemence of popular passion, so easily roused and so difficult to calm; he was aware of the subtlety and craft of the doctors; he wished to save his followers from contests too hard for them; and while waiting to give them, with the fulness of his Spirit, the whole world to evangelise, he recommended to them a more humble and quiet work, a sort of individual and domestic mission, of which the family would be the centre and standpoint.

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[1] We shall certainly be right in ascribing to the choice of Jesus the order of the apostles in couples, as it is given by the Evangelists.

"And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is most worthy; and there abide till ye go thence: and when ye come into an house, say, Peace be to this house; and if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust off your feet." They are for you wicked houses and towns, you have nothing in common with them; treat them as if they were Gentiles.

"Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city."

He who is sent by Jesus is a messenger of peace; like his Master, he knows neither violence nor oppression; he is of the race of the children of God, of the peacemakers, of those who are gentle and meek.

His "schelam" is not an empty conventional greeting, it has a sacramental virtue, being the living and effective expression of the Spirit of God which it conveys. This Spirit overflows from all whom it inspires, and by them it is ever ready to influence those around; it enriches not only those who receive it, but those who give it, and if rejected it returns as a blessing to him who has offered it. But the fate of those souls who rebel against the divine call is a dreadful one. The ruin of the accursed cities is not so terrible as the state of the man forsaken by the love of God, which he has driven from his heart; sinking helpless into the abyss, which opens before all from whom God has withdrawn his presence.

Then Jesus began to depict in forcible terms the difficulties and dangers of proselytism in the midst of the world, and to exhort his disciples to those heroic virtues without which their efforts would be in vain. His conception is not confined to the present moment, it extends to all time; it throws light upon the future, and embraces all apostolic work. By pointing out to his disciples the difficulties of their mission, he acted with the wisdom of a teacher who increases an hundredfold the courage of those whom he moulds to his views, by giving them a spirit superior to danger.

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." The sheep are defenceless; the wolves, ravenous and armed for attack.

"Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings, for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

"But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

"And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

"But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another in haste; for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come."

Such is the fate of the apostles, foretold by the Master: the hostility of men, violent opposition, persecution, judgments, tortures, hatred, death. It is the first hint of the sad destiny of the Messiah. Before unfolding it to his disciples, Jesus told them what they must suffer themselves; a stern revelation, which would help them to understand, when the time came, the mystery of the Cross.

After this gloomy picture, which must have frightened the little group of apostles, or at least dismayed it, Jesus went on to allude to the difficulties, opposition, and violence of which he himself was the object, and which was increasing from day to day. Our lot is the same, he added, "Do you not call me Master and Lord?" You are my disciples, and you will be treated as I am. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple to be as his master and the servant as his lord."

Then reminding them of the horrible insult which he had received from the Pharisees only the day before, he said to them: "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"

And what were these persecuted ones to do when these struggles came?

Jesus asks of them prudence and simplicity: two gentle virtues which supplement one another; for prudence without simplicity becomes craft, and simplicity without prudence becomes childishness: craft deceives, and childish simplicity leads us to destruction.

They are not to resist evil by violence, they must conquer it by gentleness, or avoid it, and flee from it. The apostle is disarmed of all weapons of attack, he is not the wolf that rends, but the sheep that is slaughtered; he is always the victim, never the tormentor.

But no difficulty, no danger, no violence will subdue him, he will persevere in his work even to the end, and will never know weakness or fear.

"Go," said Jesus, "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known." The work of God, obscure and unknown, shall see the light of full day. "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear,[1] preach ye upon the house-tops.[2]

"Go, fear nothing, and endure to the end."

He, who is sent by Jesus into a hostile world, without money, without provision, without a staff, without a sword, without earthly strength; humble, poor, meek, and gentle, is stronger than any human power: the body may be killed, but the soul will escape, and the soul is everything for the apostle, for in it dwells the Spirit of God by which he lives. He need fear no one, except him who has the power to cast the soul and the body into Gehenna. God, invincible, protects those who fear him; he watches over every creature, the smallest as the greatest, but those who love him are his children, and he feels for them the care of a father.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. As for you, the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

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[1] An allusion to a custom in force in the synagogues and schools. The reader of the Law in the former and the rabbi in the latter had before him an assessor or interpreter. This man spoke in a low voice into his ear, and he repeated aloud to the assembly what he heard. (Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae*, p. 253.)

[2] Another allusion to the religious customs of the Jews. On the eve of the Sabbath the Hasan announced from the roof of a high house the commencement of the Sabbath with the sound of ten trumpets or in a loud voice, just as the Mahometans are summoned to prayer by the muezzin from the top of the minarets.

In order to strengthen their courage he raised their hopes. The conception of Jesus always embraces all things, the heaven and the earth, time and eternity, the Father and all his creatures.

However difficult your work may be, he seems to say to his disciples, "Go," be a testimony unto me in the presence of all men. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

To be confessed of Jesus before the Father, the beginning and end of all things, to belong to him for ever, to be with him and in him in the fulness of light, love and life, that is a hope which should make the heart of the apostle rejoice even through all his tribulations.

With this hope he can face all pain. To be denied by Jesus, to be separated from him, that is real death, the only death he has to fear. It was moreover necessary that the disciples should know that the work to which they, as apostles, dedicated themselves, was a work of strife and combat to the death.

The Master who had commanded them to say: "Peace be to this house and to this town," who had taught them on the mountain the blessedness of the peacemaker, he, all gentleness and peace himself, who sows the fruitful seed of peace by bringing truth on earth, he it is who is destined to raise the reign of justice in the world, a fearful tempest, a tempest of violent men, the enemies of all righteousness and truth, of all sacrifice and love.

"Be not deceived: I am not come to send peace on the earth, but a sword. I am come to set a man at variance against his father, the daughter against her mother, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

To come to me you must leave all, for "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." The road that leads to me is a road of pain: "he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me." He does not wish his apostles to shrink from death, and in words which have inspired countless numbers of martyrs he teaches them the divine secret: "Fear not to lay down your life for my sake in this world: he that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

To sacrifice the life of a day is to acquire eternal life in the bosom of the Father; to set store by the life which fails is to become unworthy of that which never fails. The body ought to be sacrificed to the soul, the soul and the body to the Spirit of God.

The body which desires to live for itself loses its highest activity, it ceases to be the glorious instrument of thought, it dishonours itself, it is choked with matter. The soul which relies on itself, refusing to unite itself to God, renounces the fulness of life, and is restless in its own nothingness.

Sacrifice, the universal law of life, will be the law of the apostolate.

The discourse of Jesus to the Twelve ended with a gentle word of encouragement. As he felt himself in absolute and filial communion with the Father, so he felt himself by his spirit in communion with his disciples. The last tie became ever closer, and Jesus loved to see himself living in them.

"He that receiveth you receiveth me," he said to them; "and he that receiveth me receiveth the Father that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

To receive Jesus is to understand him; to enter into the same Spirit of truth, of righteousness and of peace; to be incorporated in him. To receive his disciple, the prophet or the righteous man, is to help in the work which they are fulfilling, to render oneself worthy of the same reward. The smallest act will not be forgotten; the widow's mite will be remembered, and the glass of water counted.

This discourse, this intimate communion, summed up by one of the witnesses in a few brief sentences, which all bear the mark of Jesus, may be considered the monument of his wisdom as a teacher.

No great man, no chief of a school, ever set a more sublime ideal before his votaries. Men of great genius are almost always inferior teachers; their very eminence and their originality are a hindrance to them; they cannot perpetuate themselves. God has denied them succession. They carry their secret with them to the tomb, leaving those whom they have charmed, and for the moment enlightened, to their weakness and mediocrity. When the conqueror vanishes from sight, his generals can only divide the spoil and break the unity of his empire; the disciples of the philosopher exaggerate his system and alter his teaching; the laws of a legislator become a dead letter; and the inspired artist, who bequeathes his methods to his school, without the art of applying them, is soon travestied by the very followers who revere his genius.

The incapacity of man to perpetuate himself by disciples worthy of him, results from two powerful causes: the inferiority of the disciples, and the incapacity of the Master to leave them his living Spirit. Jesus alone was able to remove these obstacles. He imparted the very Spirit of God to his simple and uncultured followers; and this inherent force gradually fashioned them to his own likeness. They became such as he would have them, realising in its strength the type of the apostle at once austere and gentle, humble and irresistible, generous and persecuted.

The impulse given by the Master is not exhausted. Its vitality is invincible, like the Spirit with which it is one; vigorous in the midst of a decrepit world, victorious in the midst of hostile mankind, it asserts itself from century to century by ever fresh creations. Jesus with his divine power of transmission is reproducing himself continually; when all seems exhausted and inert, new men at once arise in his likeness, who are the incarnation of his type. Their life is his very word put into action. No age has been without such apostles, generous and expansive souls, whose lives might be pourtrayed by the words of Jesus.

The Twelve, strengthened by the teaching of the Master, went at his bidding two by two, to preach the Gospel in the towns and villages of Galilee.

Jesus, accompanied by other disciples, continued his work. His apostolic zeal never waned; he never tired, he gave himself no repose. His days were spent in work, his nights in prayer.

It was about this time that the death of John the Baptist[1] occurred, a short time after his message to Jesus and a few days before the Passover of the year 29.

The writers of the Gospels alone relate the details; they learnt them from the disciples of John, who were accurately informed about it and who came from Machaerus to tell Jesus what had happened.

Josephus, alluding to the violent death of the Baptist,[2] attributes it vaguely to the easily-aroused suspicions of Herod Antipas, who knowing his authority with the people, feared he might cause an insurrection. The accounts given in the Gospels throw much light upon the narrative of the Jewish historian, which indeed it would be difficult to understand without them. Nothing in the attitude of the Forerunner suggested

[1] Matt. xiv. 1-12; Mark vi. 14-29; cf. Luke ix. 7-9.

[2] *Antiq.* xviii. 5.2.

a political revolutionist; but the fears of the tetrarch, which at first seem absolutely baseless, become very plausible, if we consider that John by severely reproving Herod for his adulterous and incestuous alliance with Herodias may have roused the popular feeling against him. The part played by the princess is quite natural under the circumstances, and it is astonishing to find any critics ready to throw doubt upon the matter.[1]

Herod's prisoner was under no misapprehension concerning his fate. Herodias had never forgiven him; her hatred was implacable. The imprisonment of him, who had publicly condemned her, did not calm her resentment nor satisfy her vengeance for a moment; she must have his life. She plotted with the courtiers, Pharisees, and Herodians, who had also been scathed by the plain-speaking of the anchorite, and watched her opportunity to be rid of her enemy.

In spite, however, of her influence over the tetrarch, she could not succeed in extorting from him this fresh crime. Herod was afraid of the Prophet; he did not dare to face the anger of the people, which would certainly burst forth at the news of his death. The righteousness and holiness of John held him in check; he had a regard for him, even took his advice and listened to him willingly. But nothing thwarts the vindictive spirit of a wounded woman, she has pertinacity and craft which will conquer everything.

The opportunity which she looked and longed for came at last. It was Herod's Feast, probably not his birthday, but the anniversary of his coronation. The tetrarch with his court was at Machaerus, where he gave a sumptuous banquet to the tribunes and the great men of Galilee. During the feast, the daughter of Herodias, prompted by her mother, entered the banquet-hall, and, according to Jewish custom, to do full honour to the occasion, she began to dance. The girl forgot that she was dancing before the man who had dishonoured her father's hearth.

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[1] T. Keim, *Jesus von Nazara, II. Band.*

The tetrarch was flattered and touched "Ask whatsoever thou wilt," he said to her, "and I will give it thee." And he swore a solemn oath that he would give her what she asked even to the half of his kingdom.

She left the room and went to her mother : "What shall I ask ?"

"The head of John the Baptist," Herodias replied without hesitation.

The girl returned immediately to the banquet-hall, and approaching the king : "I wish," she said, "that you give me here immediately, on a charger, the head of John the Baptist."

At this unexpected and horrible request the whole character of the prince betrayed itself, a mixture of weak kindness, timidity, and false religion. He was grieved at the thought of shedding blood, but how could he draw back ? He had sworn. The thought of his guests, who had heard him take the oath and who were perhaps enemies of the Baptist, intimidated him. He dared not refuse to commit the crime. He sent one of his guards and ordered him to bring the head of John on a charger. The man went and beheaded him in the depth of his prison, and brought his head on a charger, and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.

Herodias was avenged.

This was the tragical end of the Forerunner of Jesus. Such men cannot finish their career in peace, in a good old age, as the patriarchs of old. A violent death is more suitable for the prophets, the heroes of truth and justice, of right and virtue. They have fought for their victory ; they have blasted vice ; they have proclaimed in their weakness in the face of the powerful and the wicked, the *non licet* of an inflexible conscience. It is right that they should set the seal to their life, their teaching, their courage, their love and their mission with their blood.

God claims them first according to their desire. The world hates them, the world kills them ; it hopes to stifle the voice of righteousness, it only gives it immortality ; for the blood shed for God has supreme eloquence.

The *non licet*, the word of inflexible integrity in the face of violence, stratagem, and hatred, will never find a more moving illustration than this head of John presented on a charger to Herodias, an adulterous, incestuous woman, and a homicide.

John preceded Jesus to death, and died preparing his way. His blood is mingled with that of the prophets, his forefathers, and with that of the Lamb, as he called Jesus, who was soon himself to be sacrificed. The way of the Kingdom from the beginning of the world even to the end of time is a way trailed with blood.

The death of John the Baptist profoundly moved the people in Judaea as in Galilee, but they did not rise in rebellion ; the people have no initiative, not even in revolutions ; and none of their leaders gave free course to his anger. The religious rulers in Judaea trembled under the hard hand of Pilate ; and the great men of Galilee, Sadducees, and all Herod's courtiers, were perhaps not displeased with this act of political rigour ; courtiers will justify everything, even crime ; the Prophet had soon come to appear to them, as to their sovereign, a public danger ; the Pharisees themselves saw, not without secret satisfaction, the disappearance of him who had not spared them harsh truths, and who persisted in bearing witness to the man who had become the object of their hatred.

The memory of John was held in veneration by the people; after a lapse of six years, Herod's crime was held in vivid recollection. A war, having reference to the frontier-line, broke out between the tetrarch and king Aretas of Arabia, the father of the repudiated woman, and Herod's troops were cut in pieces.

This disaster drew a cry from the conscience of the crowd: "It is God," they said, "who is avenging the murder of John the Baptist."

A tradition, preserved for us by St. Jerome, relates that Herodias, on receiving the bleeding head of her victim from the hands of her daughter, vindictively pierced with needles the tongue that had protested against her crime, and ordered that his body should be cast into the ravines of Machaerus to the dogs and the vultures. The disciples of the Prophet came and took the body to bury it, and they went and told Jesus what had happened.

Even if Herodias was happy, in her gratified hatred, the tetrarch remained sad and restless. The murder took possession of him, the thought of John haunted him. He was superstitious and yielding by nature, incapable of resolution, deceitful like all weak characters. He was terrified by his crime, but he felt no remorse. The renown of Jesus, which had hitherto been indifferent to him, now caused him fear. The apostles, dispersed through the towns and villages, had, no doubt, revived the eager prepossession of public opinion with regard to their Master.

Criticisms and discussions were never exhausted, and, as usual, prejudices led men's minds astray. It was plain that Jesus was a prophet, but what prophet? It was believed, at that time, by the people, and even by the schools, that the souls of the dead could return to the living. This strange belief was applied to Jesus: some said, "It is Elias," but others said, "It is one of the old prophets," and the adherents of John declared that John himself had risen from the dead.

All these popular reports reached the court of the tetrarch, where no doubt Jesus was also talked about. The name of John, associated with that of Jesus, troubled Herod's soul and he became perplexed. He knew not what to think, and, yielding to the superstition of the crowd, he said, This is John whom I beheaded, he is risen from the dead, and therefore he does mighty works ; and Herod was afraid, and desired to see Jesus.

The Twelve returned from their first journey. They found their Master at Capernaum, and told him all they had done and taught.

But the multitude was now gathered to the place, men were constantly going in and out, and the house was crowded.

Jesus and his disciples, says one of the Evangelists, had not even time to eat.[1]

He felt the need of close communion with his disciples, and wished to procure for them some days of silence and tranquillity. The news of the death of John was a sad foreboding of his own. The time was at hand to initiate them into the mystery of his sufferings.

He arose :

"Come apart into a desert place," he said to them, "and rest awhile."

He entered into a ship with his disciples and commanded them to cross the lake, and to row to the eastern shore, towards Bethsaida.

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[1] Mark vi. 31.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MESSIANIC CRISIS IN GALILEE.

THE north-east shore of the Lake of Gennesareth, between the mouth of the Jordan and the Wady Djebarieh, is a fertile, well-watered and verdant plain, known at the present day by the name of El Batihah. It describes a large triangle of which the lake forms the base, the Jordan and the mountains of Gaulonitis the two sides. Bethsaida-Julias, which must not be confused with Bethsaida in Galilee, was situated at the apex of this triangle, not far from the river, and half a league from the lake, on a little hill, which is a continuation of the higher hills of the Gaulonite range.[1] All this district of Lower Gaulonitis, together with Auranitis, Batanaea, Ituraea, and Trachonitis, formed the tetrarchy of Philip the brother of Antipas. This prince had none of the evil genius of his family; he was gentle, upright, and peaceable in character, and resembled his father only in his love of the arts. From the time of his coronation he was engaged in building two towns, the one at the source of the Jordan, on the very site of the ancient Panias, which he called Caesarea, in honour of Caesar; and the other near the lake, not far from the little village of Bethsaida, which he called Julias, in honour of Julia, the daughter of Augustus.[2]

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[1] The situation of Bethsaida-Julias, at the precise spot we indicate, seems incontestable. It is clearly indicated by Josephus, *Bell. Jud.*, iii. 10, 7, and by Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* l. V. c. xv., § 15. Cf. Victor Guérin, *Description de la Palestine*, 3e partie, *La Galilée*, I.

[2] *Antiq.* xviii. 2, 1; *Bell. Jud.* ii. 9, 1; *Antiq.* xviii. 4, 6.

Nothing remains of the ancient town but the mount El-Tell on which it was built, and some scattered ruins; it has disappeared like so many other cities of Palestine of the time of Jesus; its monuments of basalt are utterly ruined and the fragments of stone have been used to build Bedouins' huts. Parts of the lintels and pillars may still be traced in the bare walls of their miserable hovels. It is useless to look for the mausoleum of Philip, who wished to be buried in Julias; even the name of the tetrarch is forgotten, but the natives are familiar with that of Jesus, and they show a gigantic tree, near the spring of El-Tell, under the shade of whose mighty branches they say that the Messiah used to rest.

It was towards this plain and the lonely hills in the neighbourhood of Bethsaida that Jesus wished to retreat with his disciples. The lake can be crossed from Capernaum to the shore of Lower Gaulonitis within an hour. It is probable that the ship which bore Jesus would make for land not far from the present site of Dukah.

His sudden departure was soon known in the town. The crowd, having seen the ships sail towards the mouth of the Jordan, followed the road, which skirts the lake, so as to rejoin the Prophet. Jesus, who directed his steps to the mountain as soon as he had landed, did not wait to see the people arrive. Men flocked to him from all the neighbouring towns; he had come to seek solitude, but, by his Father's will, a whole multitude was come to him. Their eagerness touched him, and he welcomed them all with kindness.

The enthusiastic regard of the people, which public men find so intoxicating, did not affect his calm; it neither elated nor troubled him. If by wise caution he sometimes mistrusted the populace, yet he always saw in them unhappy men whom he had come to save. He cast upon them looks full of compassion; he knew the troubles of their hearts, they seemed to him as sheep without a shepherd; and then he would heal their infirmities and teach them. This solitary region seemed favourable to Jesus for the continuation of his apostolic work. He began to speak of the Kingdom of God, from the height of a hill to which he had withdrawn, followed by the crowd. In listening to him they forgot how the hours passed. The day was drawing in, the sun had disappeared behind the mountains of Galilee, and Jesus was still speaking. Twilight in the East is short, and night falls suddenly.

The apostles, feeling anxiety for the people, came to their Master and said : " This is a desert place, and it is already late : send them away that they may go into the villages and hamlets round about and find shelter and food for themselves."

Jesus said to them : " I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat. If I send them away fasting they will faint in the way ; for divers of them came from far." " Give ye them to eat," he added quietly. This reply filled them with amazement. " What," said they, " shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread and give them to eat ? " The power of their Master was evidently far from the thoughts of his disciples. Not one of them dreamed of telling him that he could provide for them all. He seemed, however, to wish to rouse their confidence in him.

" Philip," he cried, " whence shall we buy bread that these may eat ? "

But Philip replied like the others : " Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." Then, addressing himself to all, Jesus said : " How many loaves have ye ? go and see."

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, enquired and said to him : " We have only five loaves and two fishes ; but what are they among so many ? There are more than five thousand men, not counting the women and children."

The repeated questions of Jesus only confirmed the apostles in their feeling of helplessness. But Jesus knew what he would do, and the more their helplessness was established, so much the more impressive would the work which he meditated appear in their eyes.

"Bring me," said he, "the five loaves and the two fishes, and make the multitude sit down on the grass, by fifties in a company."

The apostles obeyed, and the multitude spread themselves in two ranks by fifties, on the green grass of the hillside.

The Feast of the Passover was at hand.

Jesus, not being able this year to celebrate it at Jerusalem, because of the Sanhedrin, which had condemned him to death, wished to observe it, in his own way, in the desert.

He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looked up to heaven, and, when he had given thanks, he blessed and brake the loaves, and gave pieces to his disciples for them to place before the people ; then he divided the two fishes, and he gave to them as much as they would. The bread and the fishes were multiplied in his hands. They all did eat and were filled.

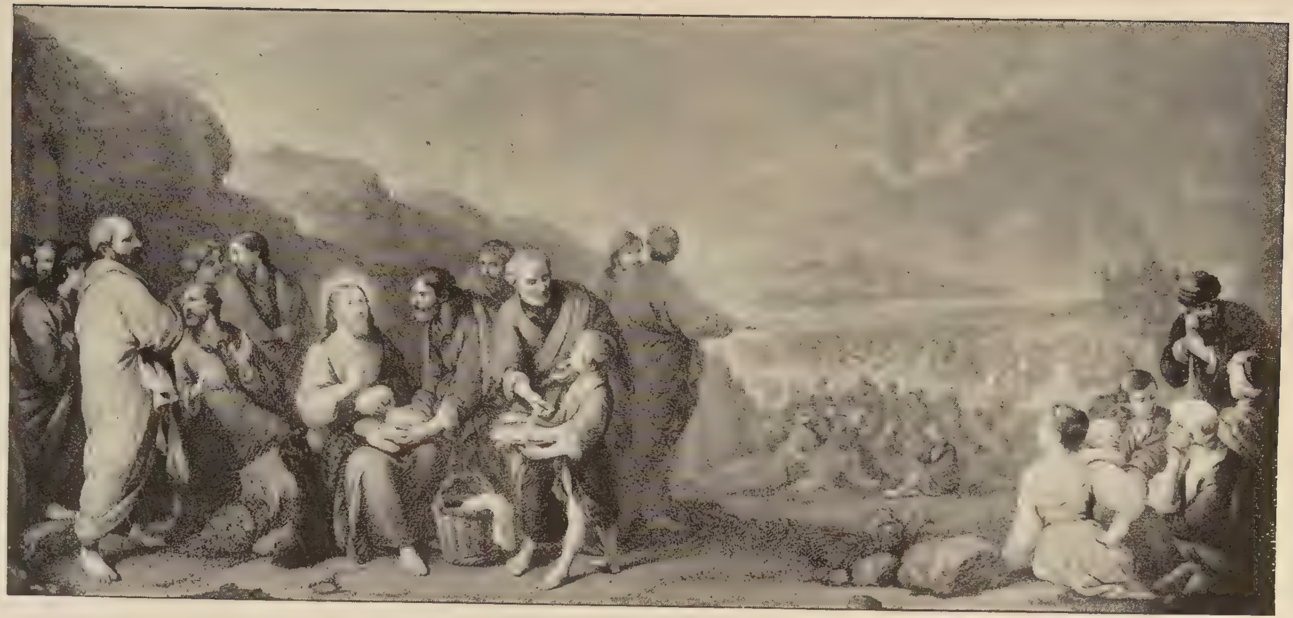
"Gather up the fragments that remain," he said to his disciples, "that nothing be lost."

And with the fragments of bread and of fish they filled twelve baskets.

The crowd were struck with admiration and wonder at the sight of this miracle.

"This is, of a truth," they cried, "that Prophet that should come into the world."

The power which multiplies and transforms things, is the same as that which creates and preserves them. God, calling beings into existence and life at a word, and Jesus feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, are one and the same. It is the same power, the same wisdom, the same goodness.



CHRIST FEEDING THE MULTITUDE.

From the Painting by Murillo.

Every time the Son of Man lets his infinite power manifest itself; by healing the sick, bringing the dead to life, or by satisfying the hungry; he obeys a feeling of compassion.

It is by lovingkindness that God works in the universe, and by it that Jesus also works.

The sight of this multitude flocking to him from all sides, following where he led, even to the midst of the desert, without thinking to provide themselves with food, and their eagerness to hear him, moved him to compassion; he did not wish them to suffer and endure hunger because of him. He, who rejected as a temptation of the Evil One the suggestion that he should change the stones into bread for his own nourishment, did not hesitate to appeal to his Father for the people who surrounded him.

We should inadequately estimate the power to which this miracle bears witness, if we restricted it to this single marvel. Jesus has done more than satisfy five thousand men in a desert; he, throughout all ages, nourishes man, ever in this world threatened with destitution. Man has need of material bread, and he cannot obtain it except by labour, which renders the earth fruitful, by thrift which husbands the fruit of his labour, by justice which secures to him its possession, and by charity which distributes it wisely.

The great, the universal miracle of the Saviour is to have given him, with his Spirit, these divine virtues. Henceforth no man can die of hunger in the Kingdom founded by him. Even the most miserable are received, and find there abundance in feasts of brotherly love.

This was the most popular miracle that Jesus ever did. It does not refer, as the others, to a single individual, but to a whole multitude; and it has a prophetic significance, for it is a new and splendid revelation of one of the highest functions of the Messiah.

The thousands of men without provisions represent famished mankind; no food can nourish and satisfy them;

One Being alone, God ; he it is whom we must see in the symbol of the loaves and fishes. In the desert of this world, Jesus draws mankind to him ; he brings men together, groups them in organised companies, gives them order and peace, and standing in the midst, he appeases their hunger ; the heavenly food multiplies in his hands and he chooses apostles to distribute it with inexhaustible generosity and power.

This scene of the miraculous feeding of the multitude in the desert at Bethsaida, remained vivid, even to its smallest details, in the memory of those who witnessed it. All four Evangelists relate it,[1] and in spite of the variations in their accounts, they supplement and in no way contradict one another.

Here is a historical fact which the criticism which denies the supernatural is bound to set aside ; for it is essentially miraculous, and no rationalist explanation can remove its character.

It must either be taken as it is, or it must be suppressed. To explain the satisfying of the hunger of the crowd by the inward contentment or transport into which they were thrown by the eloquence of Jesus, or to pretend that each one drew upon his own private store and was content with little, is a mere childish expedient, which does not deserve to be discussed, and only provokes a smile.

The mythical interpretation, in its attempts to show how the story came into being, brings us face to face with insurmountable difficulties. It refers us to the manna of the desert and the quails,[2] to the store of flour and oil of the widow of Zarephath, a store which did not waste during the time of famine,[3] and again, to Elisha's feeding a hundred men with twenty loaves and a little crushed wheat during a time of dearth.[1]

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[1] Matt. xiv. 13-21; Mark viii. 1-9; Luke ix. 11-18 ; John iv. 1-13.

[2] Exod. xvi. ; Deut. xi.

[3] I. Kings xvii. 8.

But there is a wide distinction between vague analogies and the circumstantial account of a miracle, full of details which it is beyond the power of myth to explain.

It does not tell us why there were five loaves, and five loaves of barley, why there were fishes and two of them, why five thousand people and in groups of fifty, why two ranks of a hundred, and why twelve baskets. The historian who does not disdain the express testimony of the sacred writings, and who does not allow a philosophy to come between his mind and the reality, cannot hesitate for a moment. However marvellous the scene may be, we find ourselves fairly in the domain of history. No amount of resemblance between a series of facts, occurring at distant intervals in the history of a people, can authorize us to see in them mere legends sprung from the imagination, in defiance of the testimony of eyewitnesses. No narrative could stand against such a theory.

Further, the truth of the miraculous increase of the loaves is secured against the mythical school which denies it, and against the rationalist school which tries to attenuate it, by the position which it occupies in the life of Jesus. It is not a question of any particular event, of one miracle more or less in the vast number of marvels of which his life is full ; it is a question of a work which should mark the end of his apostolic career in Galilee, promote its climax, and make manifest its result.

The preaching of Jesus had for its aim to show to all that the Kingdom of the Messiah had come, to make known the nature of this Kingdom, and to prove that he himself was its founder and its head. It was with this view that he preached from town to town, from village to village, healed the sick, promulgated his new precepts, drew to him all who were willing to come, fought the prejudices of the people and the doctors, passed his nights in prayer, attached his disciples to him and surrounded himself with apostles. After two months of incessant activity, in spite of the perfidious opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees, which never ceased, in spite of some partial failures, such as his two attempts at Nazareth, the whole people had been put in motion. The multitude was in the hand of Jesus, he was its master; charmed by his words and his teaching, excited by his miracles, it followed him whithersoever he went.

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[1] II. Kings iv. 42.

In the beginning of his ministry, he could escape from the crowd by entering into a ship, and saying to Peter, "Launch out into the deep," or, if it pursued him, by stealing away into the desert. Now the desert itself no longer protected him; they went out to join him there. Jesus was not merely a Prophet in the eyes of the people, a messenger of God, as Nicodemus called him, and as the people themselves had called him more than once: he was the Messiah. The solitude of Bethsaida, after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, resounded with one long cry: "This is of a truth the expected Prophet, he who was to come, he who was prophesied by Moses, this is the Son of David."

This popular acclamation, though apparently the triumph of Jesus, was in reality a most formidable danger to his work. He had to display all his strength, all his composure, all the resources of a divine wisdom to overcome it.

He was indeed the expected Messenger, the promised Messiah, but not the Messiah dreamed of by the mistaken conscience of the people. He was not the carnal, terrestrial, national, political Messiah; he was the spiritual, celestial, human, religious Messiah. His Kingdom has nothing in common with the kingdoms of this world. The whole aim of his preaching was to disclose the nature of his Kingdom, sometimes cautiously by symbols and parables, at other times in positive and vigorous terms. He laid claim to nothing, except to the Spirit of God; he only wished to save and to heal, to proclaim the truth, to pour life into the souls that were dead. Never in any case did he say a word or perform an act which could flatter the ambition of the people or the false ideas of the doctors. But the doctors did not wish to understand, and the dull conscience of the mass could not see. Only a few chosen ones both heard and understood.

With the exception of the disciples and the apostles, the crowd, in spite of its enthusiasm, remained blind. It did not rise to the height of the teaching of Jesus relative to the true Messianic reign, nor did it free itself from its own prejudices relative to the true Messiah.

These ardent and warlike Galilaeans were always possessed by the dream of Judas the Gaulonite. What they hoped for was an armed leader, a conqueror, a liberator. Political passion inflamed and excited them. Their enthusiasm for Jesus was a paroxysm; they encouraged one another, and formed a plot to carry Jesus away by force, perhaps to take him to Jerusalem and to proclaim him king in the face of the people.[1]

It was a critical moment. Popular movements are terrible; even the strongest are carried away by them, and the most skilful are disconcerted; but the wisdom of the Master was never found wanting in any danger.

If Jesus had set off at once with his disciples in order to escape the crowd, the agitation, instead of abating, would probably have spread and blazed out in Galilee; if he remained with his disciples in the midst of the crowd he exposed them to its contagious influence. Popular excitement is like a conflagration, it is impossible to resist its devouring flames. And the disciples, who were Galilaeans themselves, shared the fervent eagerness of the crowd. Everything that gave glory to their Master was likely to flatter them. They were far from perceiving the design of God in the work of the Messiah, and if they believed in his triumph they could not imagine it unaccompanied by earthly power. If Jesus were proclaimed King by the people of Galilee, that would be the signal of the glorious advent of his Kingdom.

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[1] The term ἁρπαζειν, *to carry away by force*, does not allow us to doubt the meaning which we have given to this passage.

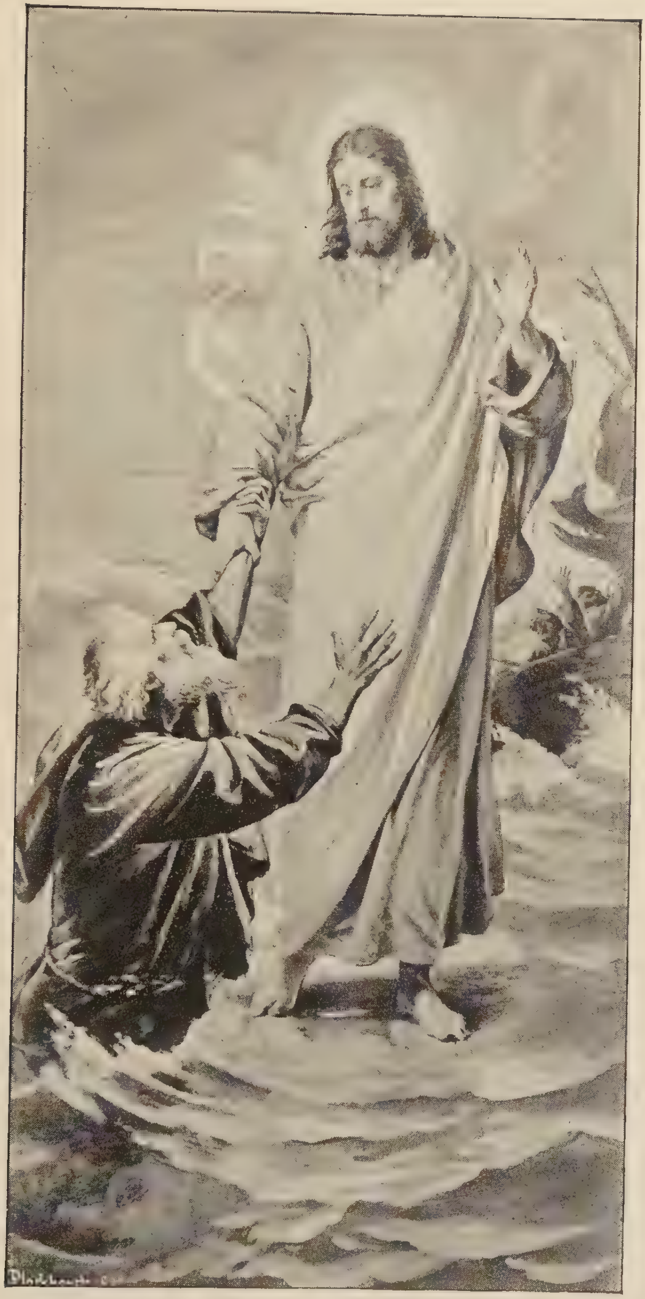
Jesus saw the danger, and, with a decision which knew neither delay nor uncertainty, he first saved his disciples. After the miraculous meal they had again approached the shore; the Master told the disciples to enter into the ship and to go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida in Galilee, while he sent the people away. The disciples obeyed their Master's order with reluctance, and he had to use all his authority to constrain them.

The ship put out to sea, and Jesus dismissed the crowd. He could always control and charm it, but he never yielded to it. Of all those who were welcomed by it as deliverers during these troubled times, so ripe for rebellion, he was the only one who never submitted to its sway.

He followed the will of his Father, and looked up to his Father to escape from men who hindered his work. At nightfall, while the multitude was dispersing, he went up into the mountain alone to pray.

And the ship was in the midst of the lake when Jesus was on the mountain. The west wind blew tempestuously, the ship was tossed by the waves, and the disciples toiled in rowing. Those who are acquainted with the little sea of Tiberias know the fury of the winds, which suddenly agitate its waters; the most intrepid rowers can hardly make head against them.

Jesus did not forget his disciples. He saw them in the spirit, and his spirit was with them without their knowing it. Towards the fourth watch he came to them, walking on the waves of the sea.


Plockhorst

CHRIST WALKING ON THE SEA.

From the Painting by B. Plockhorst.

As our will, in the narrow sphere where it exerts its rule, triumphs at each moment over the law of gravity, and releases from it our body, which it moves, raises, and transports ; so the will of Jesus, in its sphere, which is boundless because God is fully in it, absolved his body on this occasion from the laws of space and gravity. It held him above the waves, and he appeared suddenly before the ship, in the sight of his disciples. This sudden apparition terrified them ; they thought it was a spirit, and cried out for fear.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them : " Be of good cheer, it is I ; be not afraid."

And Peter said : " Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

" Come," said Jesus.

And at once Peter came down out of the ship and walked on the water to go to his Master. But the violence of the wind made him fear ; and as he was beginning to sink he cried, " Lord, save me." Jesus, stretching forth his hand, caught him.

" O thou of little faith ! " he said reproachfully ; " wherefore didst thou doubt ? "

Then the disciples wished to take him in the ship, and, as he got in, the wind ceased of a sudden, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves had left them hard of heart ; they, like the crowd who were fed, were no doubt preoccupied with terrestrial thoughts and projects of earthly glory. Man, blinded by his own vanity, cannot see the work of God. But when danger presses and tears him from himself, forcing him to look above, then immediately his eye opens with his heart ; he understands and adores.

The appearance of Jesus on the boisterous sea, and the sudden calm brought by his presence, filled the disciples with amazement, and as soon as they had landed they fell at Jesus feet, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

Instead of the human glory of a king, which Jesus shunned and disdained and sacrificed to his Messianic calling, the heavenly Father gave him a divine sovereignty, and in order to wrest his disciples from the seductions of the one, he made them witnesses of the dazzling glory of the other; by such revelations he subdued and transformed them.

On coming down from the mountain, after his long prayer, he let his power shine forth even in his mortal body. He controlled nature and its forces; he was not subject to the law of gravity; the submissive waves held him up, and he walked upon them.

This ship, shaken by the tempest, which carries the disciples, and which will, in spite of contrary winds, pass from one shore to the other, represents the Church, his Kingdom, in the midst of the world. It struggles, in the dead of the night, against all the forces of the world let loose against it, to reach the eternal shore, where it has received its orders to land. Whilst it is resisting the storm, Jesus is praying alone on the mountain of God; he comes to the aid of its weakness, he appears suddenly, radiant and tranquil, before the eyes of the rowers, and speaks to them of confidence and peace. He who has faith in him can, like him, walk upon the waves and conquer the rebellious elements, the darkness, the wind, and the sea. He who takes fright and loses confidence is overcome; but if he cries to the Master, it is enough, he is lifted up and saved. He enters the ship, and as soon as his foot touches it, at his presence alone, there is a calm and the ship is at land. He is the shore, for he is eternity.

We will consider what was happening on the eastern shore of Bethsaida, which Jesus had just left, at the time when the disciples were worshipping the Son of God on the western shore, at the entrance of the plain of Gennesareth.

The crowd, dismissed by him in the evening, returned the next morning. They hoped to find him again, for they had noticed that only one ship was on the shore, and that Jesus had not entered into it, and his disciples were gone without him. The plot, however, to proclaim him King had not vanished in the night; the ringleaders sought for Jesus, and, not finding him, they started for Capernaum, in boats which had come from Tiberias, hoping by this means to overtake the Prophet sooner.

The meeting, in fact, actually took place on the other side of the lake, just as Jesus was returning with his disciples from Bethsaida to Capernaum, and it obliged him to hasten the crisis which was pending. When a man of God, at war with the passions and prejudices of the crowd, sees the very independence and sanctity of his ministry threatened, the time for reticence is gone by; he must tear away the veil and affirm the truth in its fulness; the false and hypocritical heart will wither away, but the upright and faithful soul will live, and truth will triumph.

This explains the teaching of Jesus and the discourses which are now set forth, following the narrative of the fourth Evangelist. Their irresistible power is due to the grandeur of the assertions, the boldness of the precepts, the vigour of the symbols, and the intensity of the light they impart. Considered in reference to action, they represent, at this critical juncture, the greatest effort which Jesus made to disabuse the Galilaeans of their vain dreams of a political Messiah, and to initiate them into the truth of his spiritual and divine character.

Those, who were seeking Jesus, said to him, as soon as they had found him, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?"[1]

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[1] John vi. 25, etc.

Jesus did not even answer their curiosity; he went straight to the secret thoughts of his interrogators, he laid bare with one stroke all that was false, selfish, and, it might be, treacherous in the eager attention that was shown him.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

These severe words were a condemnation, an absolute repudiation, of the idea of a mundane Messiah, which haunted the imagination of the Galilaeans, and of the trivial glory which they offered to Jesus.

His miracles are symbols and signs which we must learn to interpret and understand. Apparently they only prove his power over matter and bodies, but really they indicate his power over soul and spirits. Those, whose bodily infirmities have been healed by him, ought to ask the salvation of their souls; those whom he feeds with terrestrial bread ought to think of the heavenly nourishment. He did not come to found a kingdom where, according to a dream of the Jews, he would prepare a feast for the material gratification of the people of God; he came to inaugurate the Kingdom where the poor in spirit should be filled and should rejoice in the Spirit. The crowd, which had gathered together at Bethsaida, only saw the miracle, without understanding its signification. Having been fed by him, it demanded only material blessings from him; he repulsed it, indignant and offended.

But after this rough lesson he spoke in gentler terms.

There are two kinds of meat, he cried, the one which perisheth, the other which endureth unto everlasting life. "Labour not for that which perisheth, but for that which endureth for ever, for that which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

The light bursts forth.

Jesus reveals his Godhead, his mark and seal is the Spirit with which he is filled; for this we must pray to him; this is the meat which endureth for ever and by which the immortal soul must live.

No religious teacher before Jesus had ever thus penetrated to the very depths of human nature, nor felt, as he did, its boundless aspirations, or grieved with more anguish over its poverty: he knew it to be heavily burdened, famished, empty; all his efforts had for their aim to draw it to himself, who alone could restore its power, enlighten its ignorance, and satisfy its cravings. The tone with which he spoke, and of which we hear the echo in his words, touched the people. They could not resist this persuasive force, which roused the conscience and tore from its depths heartfelt and piercing cries.

He besought them so urgently to seek the food of the Spirit, that the Jews, forgetting for a moment their preconceived hopes with regard to this world, cried out: "What shall we do then to fulfil the work of God, and to have the life which does not perish?"

"This is the work of God," Jesus answered, "that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

To believe: the whole religion of Jesus, the whole secret of eternal life lies in this simple word. To live by the earth, man must apply to it his energy and activity, for it is only fruitful on these conditions; but to live by God, man has only to open himself to him and to receive him; and this opening of the soul is faith. The supreme act of man in his relations with God is faith; faith implies forgetfulness of self, complete submission and full surrender to the word, will, and Spirit of God. And since Jesus said that he himself was sealed with the divine seal, we must therefore believe in him as in God.

Such a doctrine was far removed from the traditional teaching of the Jewish rabbis. The whole code of laws, commanded by Moses and observed by the Jews as the very essence of justice and the condition of life, was superseded.

We see the dawn of the whole religion of freedom taught in the Gospel, and of which St. Paul was afterwards the apostle. Jesus, who the night before refused earthly sovereignty, now declares himself the one appointed messenger of God, and in the name of the Father he calls upon all people to believe in him.

The people hesitate and resist.

Absolute faith is the last thing which man will give. Even when he is profuse in his admiration, devotion, enthusiasm, in his services and even his confidence, he jealously guards his ideas, his fancies, and his interests, and holds himself in reserve, ready to resume his old ways from the moment he feels his ideas shocked, his fancies crossed, or his interests threatened.

No one, besides, has the right to demand of another absolute faith. By making this claim for himself Jesus raised himself above mankind, he placed himself higher than Moses, he made himself equal to God.

The Jews said to him: "What sign shewest thou that we may see and believe thee? Moses had a sign. Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

The multiplication of the loaves was not enough; such a miracle did not raise Jesus to the height of Moses, and did not justify his claims in their eyes. For the feeding of a few thousand men was not to be compared with the power of him, who for forty years miraculously fed a whole people in the desert. The rabbis had taught that the first Redeemer, Moses, had made the manna fall and that the second Redeemer would renew the wonder. We find an indication of these dreams in the importunity of the Galilaean crowd.[1]

Jesus paid no attention to this demand. He had never in his whole career, in spite of his many miracles, given way in anything to this thirst for the marvellous which consumed the people. All his mighty works had kindness alone for their motive, and faith for their condition. Whoever believes in him feels his goodness, and then it expands without limit; but whoever doubts and argues with him harshly, leaves him indifferent; he passes by, without imparting his Spirit, leaving the sceptic to his wretchedness and his obstinacy. Here, with a superhuman grandeur, he affirms that he himself is the sign of God.

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[1] *Midrasch Cohelet*, fol. 86, 4.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven." However celestial the manna was in its origin, it was in its essence material, a perishable symbol of the eternal bread. "But my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven: for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth true life unto the world."

There were present in the assembly some souls who were touched and enlightened. "Lord," they cried, "evermore give us this bread."

Then Jesus began to explain, without reserve, what he was:

"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." And alluding to the obstinate persistence with which they demanded signs, that they might come and believe in him, he intimated that he himself was the true sign.

But he added, "Ye have seen me, but ye have not come unto me, neither have ye believed."

Jesus was indeed the great sign of God.

Never in the whole course of religious history has the power, wisdom, goodness, and virtue of God been more fully manifested than in the life, the words, the holiness, the works of the Son of Man. If anyone reflects on these things and yet cannot recognise the messenger of the Father, it is impossible to enlighten or convince him. To ask again for miracles, such as those of Moses when he made the manna rain upon the earth, of Joshua when he made the sun stand still, or of Elijah shutting the heavens by his prayer so that there was neither rain nor dew, is to prove our own incurable blindness. God turns away from such stubborn hearts; he loves to manifest himself to the poor and the humble, and remains inaccessible to those spirits which intrench themselves behind their material instincts, their arrogant science, and their egoism.

This persistent incredulity afflicted and depressed Jesus. He felt, on this occasion, the whole weight of it. He had in the joy of his heart, and at a sign from his Father, given a feast to all these Galilaean people; he had celebrated with them in the midst of the desert a miraculous Passover; yet the people understood nothing: instead of asking him for the bread of life, they asked for material bread; instead of rising to higher things by the help of the symbol, they shut themselves up in their narrow ideas and prejudices.

A failure such as this was for Jesus a bitter foretaste of the fate which awaited him at Jerusalem itself, when he should go to manifest himself there for the last time in the presence of the representatives of the nation.

But the thought of his Father consoled him for all the reverses which he suffered at the hands of men. The obstinacy of the unbelievers can never prevent the work of the Father; it will be fulfilled by the elect; the reprobate will ruin only themselves, and make the righteousness of God shine forth more brightly.

So it was with a calmness full of confidence, that Jesus said to them:

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will, that of all that he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

Yes, he went on with emphasis, "Such is the Father's will: every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, will have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

To come to Jesus, to believe in his word, is a gift of God. The man who shuts himself up in his own reason, in his own errors, vices, instincts, and selfishness cannot receive it. He who, at the call of the Father, that is to say of good and truth and life, becomes aware of his own misery and nothingness, will come to him and believe; Jesus will not repulse him, he will not be denied nor deceived, every hope will be realized, for Jesus has the will and the power to satisfy all men's aspirations. He will find in him the eternal life which is the fulness of all his aspirations, the strength to preserve and develop it in this world, where everything is hostile to it, and where everything dies; and such is the power of the life, concentrated by the Father in the Son of Man, that it will conquer physical death itself; and at the last day the Son of Man will raise up all that the Father has given him.

Jesus, in affirming these powers, claimed one of the most popular attributes of the Messiah, and he called to mind the hour of his final triumph when all the dead will hear his voice and their bodies will come to life. This is the true royalty which he claims, instead of the miserable empire in this world which the Galilaeans so ardently desired for him. Of this he cannot be disappointed, for it has the certainty of the divine promise. The failures which he will endure in this world will in no way dim its lustre; nay, they will the more increase it.

All these declarations, given with increasing force and clearness, are the profession of faith of the followers of the true Messiah. Never since the first day of his public life, either in Judaea or in Galilee, either in discourses to the people or in private conversations so far as we know them, had

Jesus spoken in such expressive language. It is true that no occasion had more imperatively demanded it. The line adopted by the crowd, which had, owing to its prejudices taken a mistaken view of the Messianic character, rendered it necessary that he should free himself from all compromising association with it. This explains the tenour of such a discourse, and its authenticity becomes irrefragable.

In declaring to the Galilaeans the nature and the work of the Messiah, he reveals himself in the divinity of his being and of his works; he makes manifest his divine birth, his ineffable relations to the Father, and his power equal to God; thence he unveils the marvellous destiny of man; and the marvel is not that most of the Jews remained obstinate and unbelieving before such a presence and such deeds, but that the poor received his teaching, opened themselves to his Spirit, obeyed his influence, in spite of all those obstacles strong enough to impede any force but that of God.

Truth revolts those who turn themselves from it and repulse it; the words of Jesus called forth murmurs:

He has dared to say, they whispered, "I am the bread of life come down from heaven." What does he mean? is he not Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his father and his mother; how can he say, "I am come down from heaven?"

This was the great objection of the Jews, which prevented them from accepting Jesus as the Messiah; we meet with it at every step; the Nazarenes had already stated it; it is renewed here, in direct opposition to the divine birth which Jesus claimed.[1]

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[1] Critics have thought to find in this a conclusive objection to the reality of his miraculous birth and conception. They forget two things, the obscurity and mystery which for thirty years had enveloped this divine fact, and the impropriety of recalling the subject before a hostile crowd, where it would only have met with incredulity and contempt. The miracle of the birth of Jesus is not a ground for belief to unbelievers, it is one which confirms the faith in the soul of the believer, and which only those who believe have the power to accept.

Jesus did not stop to refute his adversaries. It was no difficulty which hindered their belief, it was their inward disposition, which Jesus thus exposed:

"Murmur not;" that is, do not discuss the matter.

"No man can come to me except the Father draw him;" he will not see the sign; he will not understand; he will not believe. But, I say again, that that which the Father hath sent me I shall raise up again at the last day; I shall lead it to absolute perfection.

The objections taken against Jesus proceed always from blindness of sense, narrowness of reason, and resistance of the will. But those whom the Father draws to him, the Father, the secret, infinite source of truth, good, and life, are preserved from these obstacles; they give up that particularism which locks us up in ourselves, and in which our sensuality and our inconstant wills imprison us. They follow the secret and profound impulse which urges them on towards absolute virtue, perfect good, and eternal life, and the Father leads them to Jesus, who was chosen to give them truth, goodness, and life. It is thus that he brings them to perfection, and such is the fulness of life, which Jesus pours into them, that the body itself will feel the rebound. Vanquished for a moment by death, it will conquer death, on the last day, at the voice of him who will raise it up again.

The Jews, obstinately persistent in their particularism, in their observance of the Law, in their false religion and in their views of an earthly Messiah, resisted the attraction of the Father. They were not disciples, but slaves of their own Law, and that was the reason they could not believe in Jesus. In showing them this reason he lays bare the mystery of the incredulity of all the centuries to come. The same constant causes in mankind produce the same results.

The Master only teaches here the doctrine of the Prophets. It is written, indeed, that all the members of the body of Christ's followers will be taught of God.

"Yes," said Jesus, laying stress upon this fundamental fact of the divine life in man, "every man that hath heard the Father, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me, Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God; he alone hath seen the Father."

To feel the attraction of the source of all being, all truth, all virtue, and all life is not the same as to see him. It is, on the contrary, a proof that we are far from him, but that since he leads us on we may attain to him.

Jesus alone never felt this thirst, for he is at the very source; and he alone can lead thither those souls which it consumes. He it is who came from God, and he descended from God that he might ascend again to him, taking with him all those who come to him. Returning then to the idea which had shocked the Jews and provoked their murmurs, he asserted himself again with even greater solemnity

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life, for I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever."

In calling himself the living bread, Jesus, by using this very forcible expression, declared with extreme clearness that he was not merely the bread which gives life, but he was himself the life of God, realised in human nature.

He proceeded to multiply these divine paradoxes, and to increase to the point of frenzy the already outraged feelings of these worldly-minded Jews, by showing them what part would be played by this Manhood, at which they took offence, and by which he was to save the world.

"The bread that I will give you is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

The idea of the Master, in this discourse, develops and grows with the growth of the opposition it calls forth. At each murmur it bursts forth and shows itself more profound.

As he had a few months before, when instructing Nicodemus, compared the Son of Man to the serpent raised by Moses before the people, so he seems on the present occasion to recall the Feast of the Passover. He gives them to understand that he will be the Lamb of Sacrifice, the true victim, the new Passover, which must be eaten not by one people, but by the whole of mankind.

At the words, "The bread is my flesh," a violent argument arose among the Jews. They exclaimed, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Their antagonism had reached its height. But Jesus would not in any way palliate his words to calm their spirits. He decided to have done with this crowd, which would not enter into his Kingdom, and which became an obstacle to its realisation; he strengthened his assertions and increased the storm.

"Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

This is the part taken by the manhood of Jesus in the salvation of the world, in the Messianic Kingdom; it is one of the most profound mysteries of the doctrine of the Master. It is not only his divine Spirit which has power, but his soul and his mortal body, his flesh and his blood; in a word, his whole being. It is not enough to communicate with his Spirit, we must communicate with his soul, his body, his flesh, his blood, his person, his whole being. The Eucharist is clearly foreshadowed in these words, full of defiance of Jewish wisdom and all human reason.

Jesus is not content merely to die, to surrender his body as a victim, he wishes us to eat of it and to drink his blood.

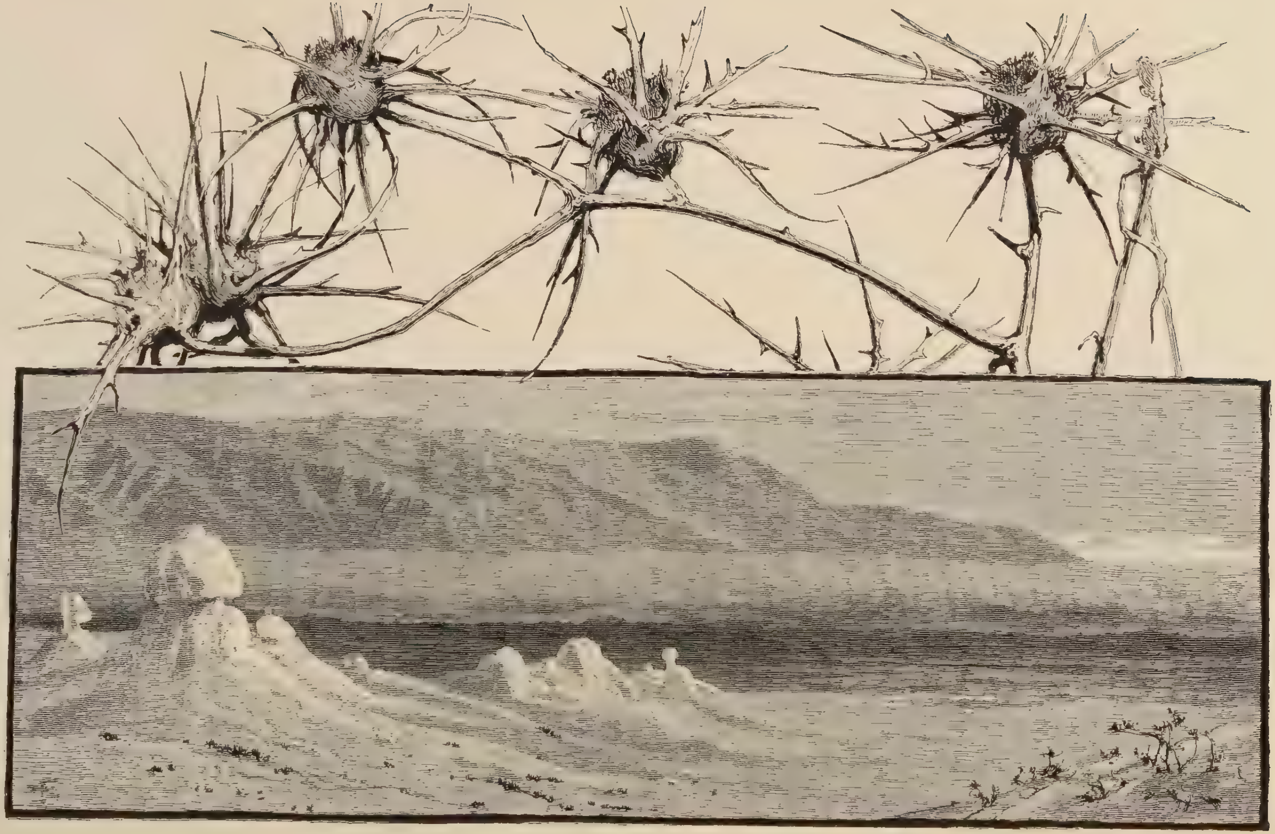
His infinite wisdom will be able to realize this, and to grant man this perfect incorporation. The believer who shall eat his flesh and drink his blood, will find in them eternal life; for he will find in them the Spirit of Jesus, inseparable from the one and from the other; and it is by this Spirit that the one will be meat and the other will be drink. "He will dwell in me," said Jesus, "and I in him." The union will be perfect, and this union with the living Jesus will give life to dead mankind. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

No words in human language fill us with more amazement by their profundity. There are two lives; the one material, the other divine; one in nature, the other in God. The former is only possible for man by terrestrial and material food which nourishes him; the latter is only accessible by the humanity of Jesus. The man who refuses to assimilate the former by food dies; and in the same way the man who refuses to assimilate the latter by the body and blood of Christ dies. He is the meat and the drink.

Jesus, to conclude this scene, one of the most remarkable of his life, asserted again what he was in these words, which manifest him fully:

"This is that bread which came down from heaven." It is offered to you, you are more privileged than your fathers. "They did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

This was his supreme appeal to this people; to reject him is to die; to accept him is to live. The nation rejected him, and it died. These words were spoken at a solemn assembly in the middle of the synagogue, at Capernaum itself.



NORTHERN END OF THE DEAD SEA.

The false conception of the Messiah was thus dissipated at its very crisis.

As Jesus rejected, at the time of his temptation in the wilderness, the offers of Satan to give him the kingdom of the world if he would submit himself to him, so at the time of his greatest influence over the people of Galilee, he rejected all terrestrial royalty and all compromise with popular passions.

The idea of the Messiah, for more than a century and a half, from the last days of Herod to the reign of Hadrian, had never ceased to tempt the ambitious. Judas the Gaulonite, Theudas the Egyptian, Bar-cochab, all these false heroes submitted to or worked upon the passions of the crowd, and provoked by its means sanguinary revolutions ; they all found men learned in the law to encourage their mad dreams, and to sanction their plans and their mission of violence by the authority of the Law and the Prophets. The Pharisees were willing to be the sheepskin which covered these devouring wolves. Jesus alone remained free from such miserable ambitions, he alone realised the type of the spiritual Messiah.

The discourses which he delivered to the people during many days, and which have been summed up in such powerful terms by the fourth Evangelist, roused a veritable tempest. He took the fan in his hand, and separated by the passionate breath of truth the worthless straw and the good grain. The greater part was rejected, a chosen portion preserved. All those who could not renounce the wisdom to which they laid claim, their national ambitions, their ceremonious religion, their worldly hopes, gradually withdrew from him, puzzled, frustrated, shocked, and offended. The excitement produced by the Master's words, the storm which they let loose, was of such violence that some of the disciples themselves who had lived with Jesus were overthrown by it.

"This is an hard saying," they cried; "who can hear it?" Jesus was watching his disciples, and he heard their murmur, and said to them, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before: will ye then believe?"

This was an allusion to his future triumph, of which the ascension into heaven would be the striking proof, for it would prove that though man had momentary power over the humanity of Jesus, he had none over his Spirit, the incoercible and sovereign force.

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth," he said; "the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." They realise and perform what they assert.

All the quickening power of Jesus depended on the Spirit with which his terrestrial humanity overflowed; and if his flesh and blood can nourish the man who incorporates them with himself by faith, it is because of the divine Spirit in them.

But to participate in this Spirit, faith is necessary. "But," Jesus added, "there are some of you that believe not."

No doubt the Master clearly discerned the inward thoughts of those who came to him, and if he allowed evil-disposed natures to attach themselves to him, it was evidently to give them a better opportunity for amendment. By thus mentioning them, without giving their names, he invited them to repentance and faith. Then, reverting as usual to the thought of his Father, whose will fills his and leads all things, he repeated these words, which he loved: "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father."

From this time many of his disciples, influenced by the movement which alienated the mass of the people from Jesus, went back and walked no more with him. This desertion must have grieved him, it was a kind of treason. However, one thought consoled him ; he saw in this rupture the purification necessary for his work ; and he would gladly have had it extended to the Twelve, for he knew by divine insight that there was an evil element among them also. He turned towards them and said, " Will ye also go away ? "

Peter, with characteristic ardour and enthusiasm, replied for all : " Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Holy One of God."

By thus speaking, the expansive soul of Peter merely put into words what he and the other apostles had already experienced by their intercourse with Jesus.

The Master, though touched by this cry, did not accept it without reserve. He knew that one of the Twelve was a traitor, and he told them so plainly in words which showed, at the same time, his love for those whom he had chosen, and the ingratitude of one of them : " Have not I chosen you ? and one of you is a devil ! "

Judas did not recognize himself in this severe allusion of Jesus. The hypocrite accepted as his own Peter's generous profession of faith, and he remained among the Twelve.

It is the will of the Father that in this world the tares shall always be mixed with the good grain.

CHAPTER X.

THE JOURNEY OF JESUS TO THE COASTS OF TYRE AND SIDON AND THROUGH DECAPOLIS

THE position of Jesus in Galilee became more defined after this crisis, of which we have just related the leading events. The people, as a whole, blinded by their religious and political prejudices, refused to enter into his Kingdom, which repelled them by its too spiritual nature. Many of the disciples of Jesus were offended and left him, and the Scribes and Pharisees continued to watch him secretly, and to beset and discredit him in public opinion. The tetrarch both observed and threatened him. There was much to fear from the man who had beheaded John, and who, in his troubled conscience, imagined that Jesus was John come to life again. Only the Twelve, and a certain number of disciples, remained with the Master.

Humanly speaking, the cause was lost.

Neither the eloquence, nor the wisdom, nor the miracles, nor the goodness of Jesus, nor the continual manifestations of the Spirit which abounded in him, could overcome the obstinate self-will of this hardened nation. They admired and applauded his teaching, they were insatiably eager for miracles; but they remained impenitent and unbelieving. When the time was come to decide between the Gospel and their old prejudices, between the new law of the Messiah, and their national traditions, they resisted and turned away, and remained the slaves of their own prejudices and traditions.

Instead of following Jesus they wished to be followed by him.

Three towns of Galilee, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, had been the object of the Prophet's most zealous care. They at least should have set an example to the others, and have roused them by the impressiveness of their conversion. But they did not change; they continued to live in the old routine of religious observance and of godless practice.

Such hardness of heart drew from Jesus a cry of sorrow and indignation; they seemed to him worse than the heathen towns, worse even than the towns, like Sodom, which were doomed to destruction.

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

"But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.

"And thou, Capernaum," the home of him whom the prophets spoke of, and whom the nations looked for, "thou which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."[1]

The judgments of God are not always deferred until eternity. The three towns, which bore the weight of these denunciations, have been utterly destroyed for many centuries. The glory of Jesus has risen upon their ruins, and his Spirit of life, which has created new nations and a new world, has left them to desolation and oblivion.

The Master confided to the Twelve his sorrow and indignation. But no despondent or bitter words ever escaped him, even in those moments of anguish when, feeling all the bitterness of ingratitude and faithlessness, he drank in deep draughts of the cup of suffering.

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[1] Matt. xi. 20, etc.

He had none of the littlenesses which often accompany genius. He did not yield to the crowd, but neither did he become embittered against it; he was never perturbed by man's distrust, for he knew himself to be stronger than evil; he sought refuge from men in the will of his Father, which governs all things, and thus the sufferings of his lot seemed easy to him. Even at this time, responding to the Spirit with which he was ever in communion, and which merged his human will in perfect union with that of the Father, he was filled with a great joy:

"O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I thank thee because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."[1]

This is a fundamental and universal law of salvation. It was true for Galilee and Judaea as it is for the whole earth; for the time when Jesus spoke to his own people, and for the times when from century to century his apostles repeat his teaching to the world.

Human learning and wisdom have not the power to penetrate the will of God; and those who arrogantly put their trust in these, will discern nothing but offence and foolishness in the purposes of God. The divine light alone can enable us to see, but it is only given to the humble and meek, to those who disregard their own wisdom and learning and who accept with unquestioning faith, from the lips of Jesus, the impenetrable mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

Throughout all man's defection or opposition, Jesus maintained, unshaken, the consciousness of his omnipotence; to his disciples he declared himself equal to the Father, the one Master, the one revealer. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father."

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[1] Matt. xi. 25, etc.; cf. Luke xi. 25, etc.

The infinite source of all being, strength, truth, beauty, love, and life, has given all into my hands. "All that is in him is in me; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."[1]

Seldom had the consciousness of his Godhead inspired Jesus with clearer or more forcible words; never had his ardent zeal, his love for man, wrung from him a more moving cry. His insight into their trouble, their anxiety, their agitation, their anguish, moved his compassion; he thought of all those who are unhappy when he uttered these words which appeal to all mankind:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."[2]

The yoke of Jesus is the Spirit of God himself; it does not burden those who accept it, it bears them up. And the burden is, that they who take the yoke upon them must renounce themselves, their instincts, passions, interests, their own life itself. But in the sacrifice of self-surrender, man renounces but his own worthlessness; full soon he knows the peace, the strength, the joy of God; he leaves the storms of time to enter into God's eternal calm.

All unprepared as they were for the gifts of the Spirit, Jesus gave freely to the people of material benefits. Even at this time, when the crowd were so hostile to his influence, he continued to heal the sick and infirm, to have pity on the stubborn-hearted, to weep for them, and to meet their faithlessness and hardness of heart by an increase of compassion.

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[1] Matt. xi. 27.
[2] Matt. xi. 28.

His good deeds, on the plains of Gennesareth, in the neighbourhood of Bethsaida, were countless. The hamlets, villages, and towns, which he passed through, were thronged with sick people, who were carried, lying on their beds, into his presence. They filled the public places and besought him that they might touch if it were but the hem of his garment, and as many as touched him with faith were made whole.[1]

As he went on his way he was surrounded by all those who were in distress; thus did he interpret his royal mission. This manifestation of goodness was the crowning-point of his apostolic work in Galilee.

From the time of the great crisis, which ended a few days after the Passover of the year 29, until the month of September, when he set his face resolutely towards Jerusalem, Jesus only made short visits to Galilee and Capernaum. The sacred writings no longer represent him drawing the crowd to him and explaining the mysteries of his Kingdom by parables, as in the first months. He went away in silence to the borders of the Galilaean territory, to the neighbourhood of the lands of Tyre and Sidon; he visited Decapolis, touched at Magdala, and set out for the tetrarchy of Herod Philip, passing by Bethsaida-Julias. It was not until after these various journeys that he passed through Galilee, and re-entered Capernaum, for a hasty visit, on the eve of quitting it for ever.[2]

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[1] Matt. xiv. 34, etc.; Mark vi. 54, etc.

[2] These excursions to parts far distant from the centre of the Galilaean agitation are omitted by St. Luke; they are clearly given by St. Matthew, and more especially by St. Mark, by whom alone certain features and incidents in the life of the Master have been preserved. We find Jesus again the same as ever, inexorable to the Pharisees, and full of gentleness towards the people.

The position of Jesus made this retreat necessary. He had reason to distrust Herod and his courtiers; the Pharisees, more exasperated than ever, were ever ready to entrap and threaten, and it was advisable that he should not expose himself prematurely to their hatred. The people, always possessed by dreams of martial glory, might renew their plot to carry Jesus away by force, and make him King in spite of himself. It was wise to escape from the blind adoration of such a multitude. Besides, the final scenes in the destiny of the Messiah were not to be in Galilee, but in Judaea and at Jerusalem. Jesus gathered his disciples about him to put the crown upon his teaching, to lead them gradually to a knowledge of his work, and to prepare himself for the final struggle.

Immediately upon leaving Capernaum to go to the neighbouring countries of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus met the Scribes and Pharisees, who were returning from Jerusalem, where they had kept the Passover.[1] These noticed that some of his disciples at their meals broke the bread without having first purified their hands by the usual ablutions. Here was at once a cause of contention. The rigour with which these bigoted formalists insisted on the most minute observances which, according to their traditions, constituted the code of perfect righteousness and piety, is well known. Ablution was the great purifying rite; to give it the sanction of age, it was attributed to the era of Solomon, but in reality it dated from Hillel and Schammai. It had rapidly gained credit and had acquired great popularity in the time of Jesus. Those who despised it fell under the ban of the excommunication of the Sanhedrin.[2]

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[1] Matt. xv.; Mark vii.

[2] *Babyl.*, *Beracoth*, fol. 46.

The custom was applied to persons and even to things, such as chalices, cups, vases, beds, and to everything used in domestic life. The strict observers of these ceremonies marked the distinction between washing, sprinkling, and dipping, between the first water and the second ; they made it obligatory to take four thousand steps to procure the necessary water, and one of the holiest of the rabbis taught that it was better to die of thirst than to transgress the tradition of the Elders on this point.[1]

These details, which vividly depict the absurdities of the observances of the Pharisees, and show to what childishness even minds otherwise enlightened may descend, help also to make us realise the divine courage of Jesus: he never yielded to such customs of man's devising, which in no way promote religion, but rather hinder and pervert it. The disciples naturally followed the example of the Master, and neglected the prescribed ablution before meat. The Pharisees were scandalised at their conduct.

Why, said they to Jesus, in an offended tone, do not your disciples observe the traditions of the Elders? Why do they eat bread with unwashed hands?

"Ye hypocrites," replied Jesus, "well did Esaias[2] prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

"For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men. For Moses commanded, saying, Honour thy father and thy mother. He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, Whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, it is dedicated by me to God, he shall be free.[1] And you do not require that he do aught for his father and his mother. In this and in many other ways ye have made the commandment of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have yourselves delivered."

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[1] *Erubbin*, fol. 21.

[2] Is. xxix. 13.

The most common snare of empty religion and hypocritical piety is the abuse of ritual. This is the Pharisaic spirit against which Jesus never ceased to struggle. Under the mask of outward ceremonial man seeks to hide his vices, and so far were these mistaken devotees led astray by pride, that they sacrificed the holy law of God to the paltry observances born of their own religious fancies. The Pharisee consecrated all he had to spare to the Temple for the purchase of animals for sacrifice, for salt and wood; and he let his own father and mother die of hunger.

This severe reproof of Jesus met with no reply. He immediately called the crowd, to teach them and to expose the hypocrisy of their unworthy masters.[2]

"Hearken unto me, every one of you, and understand: there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."

The disciples then drew near to Jesus, and said: "Knowest thou, Master, that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"

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[1] *Corban*: an abbreviated formula used by the Jews to confirm their vows. A distinction was made between the vows by which anything was dedicated to God, and those vows which prohibited or enforced the performance of a certain act. If the word *Corban* were pronounced over any object, that object became irrevocably dedicated. The Pharisaic devotee dedicated to God, to the service of the altar, and to the Temple, his goods or the superfluity of his goods; his master forbade him to use them to provide for the wants of his father and mother. Cf. Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmud*, ad. h. l.

[2] Matt. xv. 10, etc.; Mark vii. 14, etc.

Jesus no longer attempted to spare his adversaries: his words were impassioned, and unswerving in their directness.

"Every plant," he replied, "which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up: let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

Every religion founded on error is destined to perish; it has no root in God, and it will disappear like the man who has planted and founded it. Such is the fate of all the false systems, which have professed to guide mankind, but which have only succeeded in precipitating it into the ditch, where they and their victims lie buried for ever.

Jesus, leaving the crowd, went again into the house with his disciples. The parable of the true purity seems to have troubled their spirit, overthrowing, as it did, the whole teaching of the Pharisees, and setting at nought the righteousness of the Law, with its elaborate and useless ritual. Peter spoke for them, and said to the Master:

"Declare unto us this parable."

"And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him, because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, purging all meats? But that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye or envious thought, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

The prophets had often, and in forcible terms, preached these sound and simple precepts; but for many centuries the Jews ignored them more and more, and at the time of Jesus they were universally abandoned by the rabbis and the schools.

These formalists had substituted the outward, material rite for righteousness; and inward truth and uprightness were of small account. Not a single voice was raised among priests, doctors, or scribes to protest against this abuse; the teachers were blind, and the crowd, passive and thoughtless, followed in their footsteps. To these men, whose minds were perverted from the truth, Jesus at length spoke in words of irresistible force, which surpassed even those of his Forerunner. Before the face of the Pharisees he proclaimed the vanity of their practices and the hypocrisy of their formalism. He distinguished between the body and the soul; the body that is of no account, and the soul that is all in all; for the purity of the heart and the soul is alone esteemed in God's sight, who cares nothing for our bodily imperfections. Thus did Jesus, once and for all, break the yoke of those elaborate observances by which the Gentile religions, and the teaching of the Pharisees among the Jews, had oppressed mankind, and, having lightened man's conscience of the burden, he established a worship of spirit and of truth.

After this encounter, which showed once again the blindness and obstinacy of his adversaries, and their readiness to be offended without cause, Jesus arose and departed with his disciples to the borders of Phoenicia.[1] We do not know by what roads he travelled, nor at what towns or villages he broke the journey. One circumstance, mentioned by St. Mark,[2] shows that in the last months of the Galilaean apostolate, the Master intended to avoid the tumult of the crowd, and to allay its quickly-roused excitement.

On entering a certain house, where he was to be a guest, he commanded that his arrival should not be made known; but he could not be hid, for the Gentiles round about soon heard that he was there.

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[1] Matt. xv. 21, etc.; Mark vii. 24, etc.

[2] Mark vii. 24.

A woman of Canaan, a Syro-phoenician, having heard of him, and being drawn to him through sorrow and trouble, came to his dwelling and besought him, and cried unto him :

" Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

Jesus did not answer her.

And his disciples besought him and said :

" Send her away, for she crieth after us."

Jesus replied : " I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

The woman entered, and throwing herself at his feet cried, "Lord, help me ! "

Jesus withheld his compassion. It seemed as if, by a show of hardness, he wished to put the faith of this unhappy woman to the test, and to call forth an expression of her trust in him.

He said to her, " Let the children be filled ; it is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it unto the dogs."

The woman received this harsh allusion to her heathen state without a murmur, and said :

" Truth, Lord ; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

Jesus was overcome by so much humility and gentleness :

" O woman," he said, "great is thy faith. For this saying, go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter."

The woman returned to her house, where her daughter lay upon the bed. The devil had gone out of her at the very hour that Jesus had spoken.

This simple story makes manifest the universality of the work of the Messiah. By God's will, and by the action of Jesus, Israel, the chosen people, was the first to receive the good news, and to enjoy the light and the benefits of the Kingdom. But the Gentiles, represented by the woman of Canaan, are to follow in their turn, and the name of Jesus will be borne into their hearing; they too are to learn that he comes to heal and to save. Then no more will they be like the dogs, gathering up the crumbs which fall from the table where the children of the Father are filled; for they too will become his children by faith; by faith also there will be equality among Jews and Gentiles throughout the world, and even those of a despised race will, if they but believe, become members incorporate of the chosen people of God.

We cannot tell from the Gospels the exact length of time occupied by this journey of Jesus to the borders of Phoenicia. The touching incident of the woman of Canaan sheds a solitary ray upon this obscure period of his life. Even tradition, which often supplements the Gospel narratives, is dumb; for the villages where some memory of his passing might have lingered are the homes of Mussulmans. Nothing is known of his various halts or discourses, or good works. But near Jebel es Sheikh, a spring is shown where Jesus is said to have quenched his thirst; it marks the extreme limit of his journey through the north of Galilee.

On departing from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, he came again to the borders of the Lake of Gennesareth, passing through Decapolis.[1] Here it will be impossible to trace the route, unless we can fix the position of this region. Decapolis, as its Greek name implies, was certainly a confederation of ten principal towns; but we do not know the names, nor the exact situation of several of them. The Evangelists, who often mention Decapolis, assume that it is well known, and give no precise details.

Pliny, in his History, and Josephus, in his Biography, are the most ancient writers who give any information on the subject. From the former historian, there appears no doubt that several towns of the confederation were in the neighbourhood of Syria, and from both it is certain that the greater number of them, as Gadara, Hippos, and Pella, were to the east of the lake; one, Scythopolis, lying on this side Jordan, was shut in between the lower part of Galilee and Samaria, on the border of the two countries.

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[1] Matt. xv. 29; Mark vii. 31.

It follows from these plain facts that if Jesus, departing from the country of Tyre and Sidon, returned to the Lake of Tiberias by way of Decapolis, he must have directed his steps to the east, crossed the Leontes, gone down to the valley of the Jordan, passed over the river, perhaps by the bridge of the Daughters of Jacob, and followed the eastern shore of the lake through Gadara and Hippos, as far as the territory of Scythopolis.

The inhabitants of these towns were mostly Syro-Greeks or Phoenicians; the Jewish element was sparse. However, according to the teaching of the rabbis, Decapolis, though inhabited by Gentiles, was part of the land of Israel, and a Jew in settling there, in the midst of unbelievers, still felt himself at home, and shared the religious privileges which attached to the sacred soil. He who inhabits the land, say the doctors, has God in him; he who is buried in it, is absolved from his sins; it is as though he reposed beneath the altar.[1]

We do not know which road Jesus followed, nor which town in Decapolis he visited. In spite of the care which he took to avoid the crowd, the people hastened to him in increasing numbers, attracted by his wonder-working power. Curiosity, the desire to be healed of physical ills, the thirst for the miraculous; these things will always stir the people. There were led to him the halt, the blind, and the dumb, and those who were sick of divers diseases. They fell at his feet and he healed them, so that the Gentiles marvelled and glorified the God of Israel.[1]

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[1] *Babyl. Chetub.*, fol. 110, 111.

St. Mark gives a full account of one of these wonders, the healing of the deaf and dumb man. They besought Jesus to put his hands upon him ;[2] he took him aside, far away from the multitude, put his fingers into his ears, and with his spittle he touched his tongue ; then looking up to heaven he sighed and said, " Ephphatha," that is " Be opened." And straightway his ears were opened and his tongue was unloosed, and he spoke plainly. Jesus charged them that they should tell no man, but it was impossible to check the enthusiasm of a multitude, which is always carried away by feeling.

The more Jesus demanded silence, the more they published it abroad. The people cried aloud, in their admiration, " He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." It is thus that the voice of the people is the voice of God. Left to themselves, with their innate sense of right and the spontaneity of their impressions, they rejoice at the sight of truth, justice and goodness, and for this reason Jesus loved them. The eager enthusiasm of the crowd consoled him for the hostile and arrogant attitude adopted by the Pharisees.

Some days after, as he continued his journey, he found himself again surrounded by the multitude, over which he exercised an irresistible attraction. It gathered together in his footsteps and followed him, as sheep follow the shepherd, without care for the morrow, delighted and enthralled. It had continued with him three days, and there was no food.[3] Jesus ascended a hill and sat down, and then he called his disciples to him, and said :

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[1] Matt. xv. 35.

[2] Mark vii. 32-37.

[3] Matt. xv. 32, etc. ; Mark viii. 1-9.

"I have compassion on the multitude; they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far."

The disciples were astonished, and reminded him of the impossibility of feeding a whole people in the desert. Jesus said, "How many loaves have you?" Seven, and a few little fishes. He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground; then he took the seven loaves and the fishes and gave thanks to God, and brake them and gave to his disciples, who distributed them to the people. They all did eat and were satisfied; and of the broken meat that was left, they took up seven baskets full. And they that did eat were about four thousand, beside women and children.[1]

Jesus hastened to send away the multitude and to escape quickly himself. The lake was near; he entered into a ship with his disciples, and landed in the country of Dalmanutha, on the coasts of Magdala.[2]

What was the length of his sojourn in Decapolis, and what the manner of his life in the midst of these half-heathen populations, we do not know. The healing of the deaf and dumb man, and the multiplication of the loaves, are the only acts which the Evangelists have preserved. Jesus only passed through this territory, he did not settle in any place; but wherever he went, in spite of his efforts to avoid exciting the curiosity and enthusiasm of the people, he was always surrounded by the crowd, and his journey was a triumphal procession. His arrival in the country of Magdala, not far from Bethsaida and Capernaum, was soon made known.

The absence of Jesus, from the time when he asserted with such clearness and decision, in the synagogue at Capernaum, the spiritual nature of his Messiahship, had in no way appeased the anger and hatred of his enemies.

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[1] See Appendix H: *The Two Miracles of the Loaves and Fishes.*

[2] See Appendix I: *The Country of Dalmanutha.*

Though the people left him, he was constantly watched by the chiefs of the various schools and the leaders of the different parties, the Pharisees and Sadducees; who sought to confute him and surprise him, and to draw from him words which would enable them to denounce and ruin him. They knew, no doubt, of the last miracles of Jesus in the towns of Decapolis; and no doubt they endeavoured to depreciate them, by attributing them to the Evil Spirit, according to their usual method of attack.

Many of them combined[1] and came to Jesus, and, hiding their evil designs under the mask of apparent sincerity, desired him to show them a sign from heaven, no doubt promising to believe in him if he complied with their request.

Thy miracles, they seem to say, are miracles of the earth where Satan reigns; what we demand is, miracles in the heaven where God dwells; these may be the work of Satan; show us those which can only come from God; do as Elias, Samuel, Joshua, and Moses did; give us a sign from heaven, and we will believe in thee.

This sophistry was a favourite argument of the Pharisees, who hoped, by this strange doctrine, to weaken the value of the miraculous testimonies of Jesus, and to lull their own conscience, which was constantly aroused by the words and marvels of him who called himself the Messenger of God. We are reminded of the former occasion on which Jesus, with such severity and precision, and such indignant eloquence, refuted these errors and exposed this hypocrisy.

When he saw these same Pharisees adding deceit to hatred, and renewing their attacks with still greater obstinacy, than before, he could not refrain from uttering a cry of grief; he sighed deeply in spirit, says one Evangelist.[1]

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[1] Matt. xvi., etc.; Mark xiii. 2, etc.

Jesus, always master of himself, replied to his adversaries: "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather to-morrow, for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather, for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

The times, that great sky of history, of which the visible sky is but an image, were filled with signs which should have been clear to every eye. For had not the weeks of Daniel been accomplished, and the sceptre gone forth from Judah? The country lay in desolation, waiting for a saviour. The words of the prophets were fulfilled. Elias had come, in the person of John, as the precursor of the Kingdom; and the miracles of Jesus, his Spirit, and his teaching satisfied all that the prophets had declared concerning the Messiah. And yet, in the face of these signs, the masters of Israel dared to ask for others! No light can open the eyes which refuse to see.

"Why," cried Jesus, in words of passionate earnestness, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? It is a wicked and adulterous generation." Instead of obeying God, it only listens to the temptations of evil; instead of being as a faithful spouse, it is in adultery with Satan.

"It seeks after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonas." Jesus was referring to his death and resurrection, which was to be the great proof of his mission; that crowning proof which should be furnished by those very unbelievers who, in their blindness, would not understand the rest, to whom it should be a crowning offence and stumbling-block.

After these mysterious words, Jesus dismissed his questioners. He could have no dealings with these sophists; he therefore left them, and departed in a ship with his disciples to Bethsaida, which was on the other side of the lake.[1]

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[1] Mark viii. 12.

In the hurry of their departure the disciples forgot to take bread with them. Jesus was still sorrowful and indignant at the attitude of the Pharisees with their invincible determination to reject God's call, and the darkness in which they wilfully wrapped themselves. Suddenly he said to those whom he had chosen, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod."

The disciples did not understand the meaning hidden under this image of the leaven; they were only thinking of the provisions they had forgotten, reproaching one another for their negligence, and asking themselves how they should live if the Master, according to his custom, led them to some desert place.

Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, which they did not dare to speak openly, said: "Why reason ye among yourselves because ye have no bread? O ye of little faith, perceive ye not, neither do ye understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

"When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up?" "Twelve," replied the disciples.

"And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up?" And they said, "Seven."

Then he added, "Why do ye trouble yourselves? Cannot I feed you? But it was not concerning bread that I spoke when I said, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

At last they understood to what he referred.

Jesus at all times tried to elevate his disciples' thoughts by concealing truths under the veil of chosen symbols, which the various incidents of life suggested, and which he left to them to interpret. Here he wished to warn them that the dominating influence of the Pharisees, which tended to choke the good grain of his teaching, was likely to prove a source of danger.

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[1] Matt. viii. 22, etc.

When they had crossed the lake they landed, and came to Bethsaida.

And they brought a blind man unto Jesus, and besought him to touch him. The faith of these people was so great, that they were persuaded that he could heal him merely by the laying on of hands.

Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town, to avoid the tumult of the crowd. Then he anointed his eyes with spittle, and laid his hands upon him and asked him if he saw anything.

"I see," said the blind man, "men as trees walking."

Then Jesus put again his hands upon his eyes, and the blind man began to see. Gradually he saw everything clearly, and was healed.

"Go to thy house," said Jesus, as he sent him away, "and if thou go into the town tell no man what hath befallen thee."

This graphic account, given with full details, was evidently obtained from an eye-witness. St. Mark, who relates it, was no doubt repeating the description of St. Peter, one of the three apostles whom Jesus loved to take with him, even when he avoided the crowd and his other disciples.

The full scope of the miraculous acts in the life of our Saviour would not be rightly grasped if, after the manner of the crowd, we admired only the external and material element in them. It is not enough to recognise in them merely the divine proofs of his mission, but we must regard them as "signs," as St. John so expressively calls them.

Every act of Jesus is a lesson of profound meaning.

The healing of the blind man of Bethsaida is the living symbol of the progressive action of Jesus, bringing into the light all those who do not see the truth of God.

In the same way, by satisfying the people with loaves, which were miraculously multiplied, he revealed himself as the sustainer of mankind, and by giving sight to blind men he showed himself to be the light of the soul.

Man has lost the knowledge of the divine world, he wanders in darkness, incapable of understanding God; Jesus comes to him, takes him by the hand, draws him aside, and, by gradually opening his eyes to the light of eternal truth, he fulfils towards him one of the most necessary Messianic functions.

This work of spiritual healing is seen in its greatest beauty in those Galilaeans who were chosen to be his apostles. The last months in Galilee were dedicated to it. By isolating himself more from the crowd and the towns, Jesus gained a closer intimacy with his disciples, and prepared them to receive those higher communications which were more difficult to understand and more unlooked for. The secret work of the Master in its very essence cannot be described, for it is the invisible work of the invisible Spirit in the unfathomable depths of the conscience. But the results are known to us. We can see the starting-point and the goal, and we can follow in the Gospel narratives each successive phase of the gradual transformation.

The disciples, who were sprung from the Jewish masses, had to be led quietly out of the troubled atmosphere of doubt and error. Once brought into personal contact with Jesus, they could feel the all-powerful influence of his Spirit; and being thus, little by little, initiated into truth and virtue, they found his real nature, his divine power, his teaching, his precepts, and designs, dawn almost insensibly upon them. In less than three years, these fishers of the lake, these tax-gatherers, these children of the soil, cast off their primitive nature, and assumed the nature of their Master. He became their wisdom and strength, their soul and their spirit, and by him alone they both thought and acted. "I live no longer," one of them said in after-years, "but it is he who liveth in me."[1] No such transformation is to be met with in the whole of secular history.

Thus were the disciples, the constant witnesses of his miracles, subdued at length by his grandeur and his divinity. But there remained in his weakness, his sorrows, his humiliation, and his death, a deep and tragic mystery, of which they had no conception. And yet this mystery was on the eve of its fulfilment, and the time was come that it should be revealed to them by the Master.

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[1] Rom. v.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FUTURE DEATH OF THE MESSIAH. THE TRANSFIGURATION.

JESUS only made a short halt at Bethsaida. After his final rupture with the people of Galilee, his life was one long journey, far away from Capernaum and from the lake, through towns and villages, where he endeavoured to pass unknown. He had travelled through the borders of the country of Tyre and Sidon and throughout Decapolis, and he now sought with his disciples a more complete solitude in the neighbourhood of Caesarea.

The territory lying on the east of the Jordan between Julias and Caesarea is a wild mountainous waste, where even ruins are rare. In the time of Herod it must have been sparsely populated. It was traversed by the great Roman road which led from Damascus to Jerusalem.

Jesus must have crossed this road near the Bridge of the Daughters of Jacob, as he journeyed towards the villages in the neighbourhood of the town which Philip[1] the tetrarch had so much beautified. We have no details of his apostolic and public work in this country, which he was visiting for the first time; as in other places, those who were sick and suffering, cried to him, and he comforted and healed them. Nevertheless his real object was not to preach the Gospel in the tetrarchy of Philip, but rather to prepare his disciples for the tragic fate which awaited him. The scenes of close spiritual communion between him and them threw all other events into the shade, in the memory of those who were present; they occupy the whole period intervening between the ministry in Galilee and the supreme event which was reserved for Judaea and Jerusalem.

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[1] Matt. xvi. 13, etc.; Mark viii. 27, etc.

At this time two conflicting feelings were struggling for the mastery in the soul of Jesus; bitter sorrow at the desertion of the people, whom he had tried in vain to rally to the faith, and thrilling joy at the sight of his disciples, faithful and believing. They, however, do not seem to have felt either trouble or anguish at the defection of the people which so grieved their Master; the more he was deserted by them, the more closely did they gather round him. Secure of the protection of an invisible force against all the dangers of popular impulse, and unshaken in their confidence, they surrendered themselves calmly to the glorious dreams of the future Kingdom, and to the illusions which the wisdom of Jesus was so quickly to dispel.

One day, Jesus and the disciples who were with him were walking from village to village round about Caesarea. Jesus wished to elicit from them a new and decisive confession of their faith.[1] It was evening, and he had prayed alone, according to his custom. Prayer was not for him merely a complete surrender of his spirit, his will, and all his human faculties to God his Father; it was also an all-powerful though invisible means of influencing the souls of those whom he wished to save, to elevate, and to strengthen. Being alone with his disciples, he asked them this question: "Whom do men say that I am?"

Jesus knew the rumours which were current among the people on this subject; he questioned his followers, not in

[1] Matt. xvi. 13, etc.; Mark viii. 27, etc.; Luke ix. 18, etc.

order to inform himself, but to lead them on to proclaim in opposition to the errors of the people the truth concerning himself. The strength of the opposition between the disciples and the crowd on this point, will enable us to judge of the gulf which henceforward was to divide them.

The disciples replied :

"Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the old prophets risen again."

This testimony was a true expression of the state of public opinion. The people no longer saw in Jesus the Messiah whom they had dreamt of, he was only in their eyes one of the prophets who were come to prepare the way.

"And ye," said Jesus, "whom say ye that I am?" Peter, who had already protested the fidelity of the Twelve to the Master at the time of the crisis at Capernaum,[1] now confessed in the name of all their faith in his divinity.

"Thou art the Christ," he cried, "the Son of the living God."

These words of Peter were not inspired by a vague confidence in the superhuman grandeur of Jesus, but by a luminous, distinct, and discerning faith; though few, they are all-containing, for they declare the Messianic character of Jesus and his divine sonship.

The very essence of faith is that it delivers us over entirely to him who is its object. He who believes is no longer his own master; he belongs unconditionally to him in whom he believes. He renounces everything: his ideas, his interests, his own personal initiative. He dies to himself to live spiritually in another; he gives his own life for the life of another. No one but God has the right to demand this absolute faith, for every man has faults, imperfections, and errors, and therefore to surrender oneself to a man is to become the slave of that man's less worthy attributes.

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[1] John vi. 69.

Jesus demanded absolute faith, and that is a sign that he claimed the rights of God. But after having preached the Gospel in Galilee for more than seven months, to win this faith, only a few of the poorest and the most ignorant were convinced. Those things which the learned men; the Scribes, the Masters, and the Rabbis; neither could nor would understand, they understood and proclaimed; what their nation rejected they accepted. With this handful of believers Jesus was able to found his Kingdom, to move and to conquer the world.

The confession of Peter touched him.

"Blessed art thou," he cried, "Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood[1] hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

It is not, indeed, in the power of man to recognise by faith that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; neither genius, nor learning, nor human traditions can exalt man so high. It is necessary that God himself should reveal the Christ to us, and that man should accept this revelation. The Father has multiplied and still multiplies witnesses around his Messenger and his Son; but the man who relies only on his own genius, learning, and traditions blinds himself; he rejects the witnesses, contests the miracles, opposes his vain arguments to the word of the prophets, and remains in his darkness. Jesus is to him merely a wise man or a prophet, and not the one Messenger, the Son of the living God. No wise man, and no prophet, can save the world, but God alone; and not to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus, is not to know him aright. To conquer evil, we must have God in us; and to have God in us, we must believe in God.

The Kingdom of Jesus did, in truth, begin on that day

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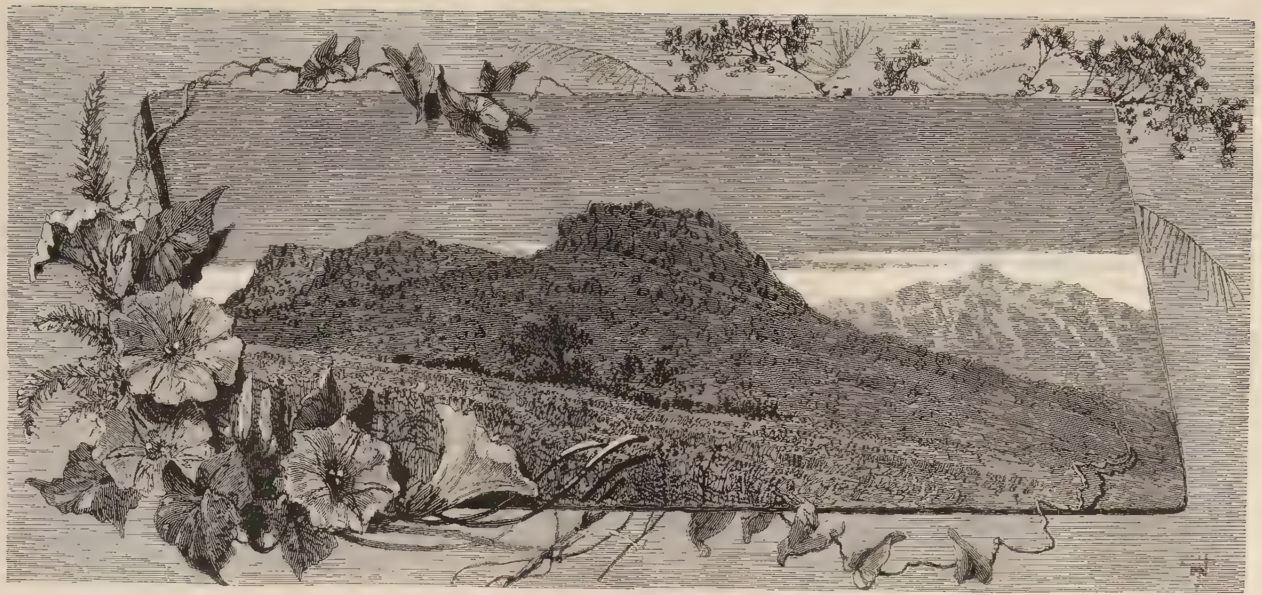
[1] A Hebraic expression constantly used in sacred literature and particularly in the Talmud, to express the terrestrial, carnal, animal nature of man in opposition to God.



THE HORNS OF HATTÎN (KŬRÛN HATTÎN).

The traditional site of the place where the four thousand were fed.

when, surrounded by his disciples, he was recognised and proclaimed by them as the Messiah, the Son of God. This he now declared solemnly, as, addressing Peter, he explained to him the mystery of the new name with which he had baptised him, when he saw him, for the first time, on the banks of the Jordan.

Thou knowest me to be the Son of the living God: "And I say also unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Faith in Jesus as God is shown here in all its grandeur. It was in reward of faith that Peter, the first of the believers, was chosen to be the human foundation, the firm rock of the Church; and on him all the elect of the future were to lean, that is, whosoever following his example, shall believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The faith of Peter and his successors will be an unfailing faith. Others may be shaken, but Peter and his successors, never.

The great design of the Kingdom of God now begins to show itself: the plan of Jesus is disclosed to the eyes of his disciples by this word "the Church," which he had not employed before.

He will call to himself and gather together in him the chosen ones, who are scattered throughout the earth and among all nations; and this gathering together in one faith constitutes the Church. Jesus created her to be indestructible and to be invincible. No power in this world, not even that of hell, which contains them all and represents the spirit of evil, can prevail against her. She will withstand everything; whether arrogant science, or false religion, or material culture, or the cunning or brutality of politics, or the corruption which destroys everything, or man's inconstancy, or time itself. The

Spirit is its strength, and nothing terrestrial, nothing human nor infernal, will overcome the Spirit.

Jesus wished to provide a government for this multitude of believers, an authority within his Church; and it was upon Peter that he conferred this power, by giving him, as he symbolically expressed it, the keys of the Kingdom. Peter will rule those who believe; he, the instrument of the Spirit of God, will give the Spirit to those who are worthy, and withhold it from those who are unworthy; those who receive it will be admitted into the Kingdom, but those who do not receive it will be rejected. Jesus will remain the invisible, and Peter the visible head, and in his mission he shall not fail, for Jesus has promised him.

Thus wonderfully is human reason set at nought. A Galilaean workman, proclaimed the Son of God by a fisherman of Bethsaida, announces that he will build a structure which will be proof against the powers of death, in a world where everything falls to ruin, where time alone suffices to obliterate all things, where nothing is enduring, no creation of genius, no religion, state, conquest, civilization, race, school, legislation, system; he promises immortality to this structure, which is his Church: and the immovable foundation on which he builds is a weak and mortal man, whom he invests with divine authority. Nothing more marvellous is related in history: it throws everything, Vedaism, Buddhism, Parseeism, Mahometanism, and Philosophism, into the shade; it is without a parallel in the works of man.

Jesus constitutes in himself the one centre, the absolute power. In him alone we must believe, to him alone we must attach ourselves by faith. He does not appeal to any particular race or nation, all are included; all who live and think, all who sigh, and all who hope. There is no system, no written law, but there is the Spirit of God, which is his Spirit, and the authority and obligation to spread it, in his name, throughout the world.

All things are corroded by perverted reason, destroyed by selfish wilfulness, mortified by tainting corruption; but the power of the Spirit opposes everlasting truths to the hollow theories of reason; it opposes justice, charity, and holiness, to self-seeking, violence, and voluptuousness; sacred and sanctifying rites to the superstitions of false religions; and an immutable and peaceful authority to the changing and tyrannical powers of this world.

When we see, after eighteen centuries, the triumphal realisation of this plan, framed by Jesus in the solitude of the mountains of Caesarea, it is impossible for us to attribute it to one who was only a great man. The boldness of the work, the magnitude of the difficulties, the weakness, nay, the insignificance, of the means employed, prevent us from so doing; they force us to recognise, in the framer of this design, the virtue and wisdom of God.

Jesus worked with absolute independence and authority; he had need of no created thing, his force was all-sufficing. Apparent failures, which disconcert even the greatest men of genius, never stopped him, they only served to hasten the fulfilment of his designs.

When the people of Galilee forsook him, he gave a fresh impulse to his work. At first, he had attracted followers to him; then, from among their number, he set apart a chosen twelve, whom he made apostles; now he gives pre-eminence to one of the Twelve, and promises him, under the symbol of the keys, the full power which should enable him to govern his Kingdom.

Those who have faith feel the need of imparting it to others, they wish to declare it and spread it abroad. At the close of this scene, the disciples, emboldened by the words of Jesus, desired to publish everywhere, and to all people, who their Master was, but he restrained them: their hour was not yet come, they could not hope to convince the people of his divinity, when Jesus himself had failed.

It were better that they should keep their faith and hope in the depths of their hearts, for there they would grow in strength and become firm and concentrated. The Master straitly charged them and commanded them to tell no man that he was the Christ, for this title was likely to be misinterpreted by the crowd. To publish abroad that Jesus was the Messiah, would be to expose him to a renewal of the Galilaean crisis, which he had so lately allayed by his wisdom, promptitude, and firmness. Besides, the disciples themselves cherished hopes of earthly grandeur for him whom they proclaimed the Son of God. They lived near to him, in the bright light of his holiness and his power; and the countless miracles which they witnessed, developed in their minds a boundless confidence in him who was obeyed, at once, by nature, men, and spirits.

Jesus, feeling them to be now more firm in the faith, at length disclosed to them the secret of his destiny; a mournful secret to which he had hitherto only made obscure allusions.[1]

"The Son of man must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."[2]

Man goes to meet his fate blindly, but Jesus perceived his, even to the smallest details. It was revealed to him in the will of his Father, of which he had perfect knowledge, in the prophecies which foretold his sufferings, in the progressive development of events, and in the hatred of his enemies which nothing but his death would satisfy. In disclosing the future to his disciples, he must have betrayed the sorrow which filled his soul at times, even unto death.

The disciples seem to have rejected this solemn declaration of our Lord. They could not even imagine that their Master should suffer such a grievous death. Their faith in his divine power, their love for himself, their illusions concerning the Messiah, all combined to render such an idea impossible.

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[1] Matt. iii. 15 and ref. ; John ii. 20, iii. 14, vi. 52.

[2] Matt. xvi. 21, etc.; Mark viii. 31, etc. ; Luke ix. 22 etc.

Peter, on this occasion, once again expressed the thoughts of all. He took Jesus aside, and, prompted only by feelings of love and devotion, reproached him for looking forward to so sad a destiny, saying:

"Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee."

Jesus turned to him, and in a severe tone rebuked him, saying:

"Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

The Christ of God does not fulfil the expectations of human wisdom; he is the embodiment of the conception of the eternal wisdom. Those who try to know him by means of the former, will fail; they will never understand the twofold mystery of his divinity and humanity; they will deny the one or the other, the divinity because it seems too high, the humanity because it appears unworthy of him; they will never penetrate the divine mystery of a Son of God devoted to death. It is a suffering God who saves mankind. If he were God alone, he would not know our griefs; if he were man alone, he could not solace them: needs must that a God should go to death and suffer martyrdom. And human reason will, at the sight, be offended as Peter was; but Jesus will thrust it from him, and command the believer to follow him, even though the way be stained with blood.

After the severe rebuke addressed to Peter, Jesus wished to point out to his disciples and to all, what he demanded from those who would follow him faithfully. No teacher has ever made greater demands. He insists on a complete renunciation, a generous acceptance of all sorrows, even to the sacrifice of life itself.

It is not enough to proclaim him the Son of God; we must share the sorrowful destiny of the Son of Man. Jesus saw the cross on which he should die, at the time when he framed this comprehensive law of heroism, which has remained the supreme law for the true disciple of Jesus.

"If any man will come after me," he cried, making a sign to the people to draw near, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Jesus did not hesitate to set at defiance the natural instinct of self-preservation which shrinks from suffering and death; it is his will that we should follow in his steps, even though we should be led to suffer or to die. The true life, even at the price of suffering death, cannot be too dearly bought.

"Whosoever will save his soul rather than follow me," he said again, "will lose the life which I will give him: and he who is not afraid to lose the life of to-day, for my sake and the Gospel's, will save his soul, and will live through me the life which is eternal."

It is the soul which must be saved, for that is the whole man. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

This doctrine, so disdainful of all men's earthly aims and ambitions, this spiritual teaching, which Jesus delivered as the Messiah, the divine representative, would naturally be received with considerable scorn and contempt; not only by the Sadducean sceptics, but by the Pharisees, infected with the pride of their class, and even by the people whom they led astray. Jesus, who was himself one day to suffer crucifixion knew to what opprobrium his followers would be exposed; he foresaw that the weak and faint-hearted would be ashamed for him, and, knowing that man finds shame more terrible to face than death, he said:

"Men will be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; but whosoever shall be ashamed of me, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."[1]

The conception of Jesus is boundless in its range. We feel that he lives at the same time on earth and in heaven, among men and with his Father; throughout this life of sorrow he keeps the glorious aim in view, and as he wishes us to sacrifice all to gain eternal life, so he wishes us to tremble before the terrors of that day when he shall come in the majesty of his glory and the omnipotence of his righteousness. The gloomy prophecies of the Master weighed upon the souls of his disciples; the thought of what he was to suffer at Jerusalem, and the severe duties imposed on those who aspired to follow him, filled them with misgiving and with a secret fear. If he whom they confessed to be the Son of God was doomed to die, what would become of his glorious Kingdom? This thought disconcerted their hopes; they turned their minds from it, not daring to think of it, or even to question their Master.

Weak man cherishes the hope that he will escape the troubles which await him, by closing his eyes to them. Jesus had regard to this weakness of his disciples, and, to restore their courage, he was silent concerning his sufferings, and spoke to them of his future glory. One day, feeling them to be in great dejection, he even assured them, in a solemn tone, that some of them were shortly to behold it.

"Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they have seen the Son of man coming in his power and in his kingdom."[2] These mysterious words referred to a marvellous event, which was soon to occur to justify them.

Six days after, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, and brought them up into a high mountain, apart, to pray.

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[1] Mark viii. 38; ix. 1.

[2] Luke ix. 27, 28; Matt. xvi. 28; Matt. xvii. 1.

The name of this mountain is not mentioned in the Gospels; the only witness who has alluded to it in his writings is Peter, and he calls it "the Holy Mount."[1] But the tradition which points to Tabor has never, during so many centuries, been broken or contradicted.[2] On the contrary, it is remarkable that, up to the eighth century, the natives called Mount Tabor the "Age-Mons," a name which can have no other origin than the "Agion Oros" of Peter. Erect as a pyramid, it stands like a gigantic pedestal, nearly two thousand feet in height, at the north-east extremity of the plain of Jezreel. A low ridge of rock separates it from the mountains of Nazareth; its sides are covered with beautiful oaks, among which the road winds up. The summit is an oval tableland, the southern half of which is piled with ruins; some, the remains of ancient fortresses of the time of the kings of Israel and of the Arabian conquest; some, the time-honoured fragments of three churches built in the time of Helena and dedicated to Jesus, to Moses, and to Elias.

From the top of the dismantled walls of the old crumbling towers, the whole expanse of Galilee may be seen, with its mountain-chains, its valleys, its plains, and a blue corner of its lake. There is very little vegetation at the present time, only a few black and grey specks mark the scattered trees, which the axe of man has spared.

Everywhere there is green grass, interrupted by ploughed fields which extend in long dark bands like the Bedouins' tents of skins. Here and there nestles a village, with its square hive-like houses crowded one upon the other. As far as the eye can see, over this hilly land, all is bare and sombre in colour. In the extreme distance to the north, behind the mountains of Safed, is the white crest of Lebanon and the summit of Mount Hermon, like the snow-white head of an old man. To the east lie the mountains of Jaulan in a long straight line, varied here and there by some higher peaks. Further still, to the east, are the blue-grey mountains of Arabia Petraea and of the great desert. The deep valley of the Jordan, hollowed in the rocks, enables us to see, on the eastern side, the wild gorges through which the rivers Hieromax, Zerka, and Arnon rush down; and on the western side the great Wadys Bireh and Ajalun, sloping from the tableland of Jezreel. To the south, a large mass, of the same tint as the mountains of Arabia; these are the plateaux of Moab, which overlook the Dead Sea. To the west, the rugged ranges of Judaea, the monotonous heights of Samaria, and the long rampart of Carmel, bounding the plain of Megiddo.

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[1] II. Peter i. 18.

[2] See Appendix L: *Authenticity of Tabor.*

A glimpse of the Mediterranean may be had by looking through a hollow of Mount Carmel and along a neck of the mountains of Nazareth; it appears as a blue spot on the clear background of the sky. This magnificent sight completes the vast horizon.

It was here, in the very heart of this Galilee which had seen the beauty of the Son of Man in all its mild lustre; it was here, on a remote summit, bathed in light, that Jesus brought his three chosen disciples, one starry August night, and showed them his eternal glory in a brilliancy which eclipsed even the Eastern sky.

While he prayed he was transfigured before them.

His face was changed, it shone as the sun; his garments became white as snow, whiter than any fuller can make them.

And, behold, two men appeared unto them, talking with him: they were Moses and Elias, enveloped in glory. They spoke of his death.

But Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep. When they were awake they saw him in his glory, with the two men with him: and, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, "Master. it is good for us to be here:

if thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias."

While he was speaking, a bright cloud came and overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

Jesus came and touched them:

"Arise," he said, "and be not afraid."

They lifted up their eyes and looked around, and saw no one; Jesus was alone with them.[1]

The impenetrable wall which divides the terrestrial world from the divine world, was for a moment broken down, and the different conditions of mankind were made apparent.

Above the three disciples, who still bore the burden of life and who were heavy with sleep, which is the image of death, there appeared Elias and Moses, both of whom had entered into eternity. They spoke with Jesus, who is Lord over them, and who, in the unity of his person, reunites all the worlds in glory. His raiment, of the whiteness of snow, is the symbol of that which matter will become at the time of its divine transformation; his shining body foreshadows what we ourselves shall one day be; his soul, which embraces the infinite, reveals the destiny of all those spirits who are called to the true life of God. The bright cloud, which envelops everything, represents the ineffable Being, who will gather to him all the chosen ones, when they will possess for ever the joy and the glory of the Son of God.

This is Christ as we behold him in the majesty of his Kingdom, in that of his Father and the holy angels.

This marvel outweighs all the others. When Jesus commanded spirits with authority, remitted sins, converted the hearts of men with a word, healed the sick, controlled nature, the wind and the tempest, he manifestly exercised his influence on things outside himself; at his Transfiguration he himself became the object of the miracle. The divinity within him, which was hidden under the veil of a mortal body like our own, for a moment shone through the veiling flesh, tore from it all obscurity, weakness, suffering, and mortality, to clothe it again with light and glory. When the spirit and soul of man is bathed in the glory of God, when the soul, pervaded by God, envelops the body which it quickens with its own beauty ; when matter pervaded by the Spirit throughout all its kingdom, suffers a glorious transformation which renders it a worthy habitation for the sons of God, glorified in the image of Jesus, then the Kingdom of Heaven shall be consummated.

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[1] Matt. xvii. 1; Mark ix. 2; Luke ix. 28.

God appeared in Jesus at his Transfiguration, as he will in us at the end of time.

By this revelation to three of his disciples, Jesus wished to show to all mankind, the glorious goal which he should reach through suffering and death. Sorrow and death are but the way ; the end for him, as for us, is the transfiguration of our whole being into the splendour of God.

It was not only his face and his body which were of a dazzling brightness, for even his raiment was white as snow ; all that touched Jesus was transformed into light.

Two mysterious figures were near him : Moses, the great lawgiver, Elias, the great prophet ; they spoke of his death, that "Exodus" which should take place at Jerusalem. By going there to die, Jesus fulfilled the Law represented by Moses, and realised the word of the prophets, represented by Elias. His end was to be more grand than theirs ; not to die, like Moses, at God's kiss ; not to be translated, like Elias, in a chariot of fire ; he was about to surrender himself through love in an ignominious death, to the anger of God.

The disciples present at this manifestation, which the prayer of Jesus had called forth from the very depths of heaven, were asleep. When they awoke they were filled with an inward joy; they wished to dwell for ever with their Master on Mount Tabor. The close communion of God with the pure heart is always accompanied by such unspeakable transports which are yet akin to terror; for in the presence of the Almighty, man sinks into insignificance.

God revealed his presence, under the image of the bright cloud which enveloped Jesus, Elias, Moses, and the three Apostles. This same cloud which was shown in the wilderness[1] to the people of God, and at the dedication of Solomon's Temple,[2] will be seen again in the triumph of the Ascension of Jesus. A voice came from the cloud, the voice of God himself, saying: "This is my beloved Son, whom I have chosen; hear him." A new and solemn intervention of the Father was necessary to persuade and command the disciples to follow his son and to do his bidding, in the fulfilment of his sad destiny.

Peter, who had said to Jesus, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee," heard at this time the voice of God himself, saying: "Listen to my chosen one, whatsoever he saith unto thee, follow him whither he leads thee, whatever be the road." And to emphasize this unique sovereign authority of Jesus, the only ruler of men, at that very instant the great lawgiver and the great prophet disappeared, and Jesus remained alone.

He is the law, he is the light; all things that were before him vanish at his presence; he alone shows mankind the end for which it should strive, he alone opens the way by which it should travel. Though the way be rough, the end will surpass our expectations. He has the right to require all things, for he can promise all; if death is the way, we will walk with him to death, to enter into life.

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[1] Exod. xiii. 21, etc.; xvi. 10; xix. 9; xxxiii., xxxiv., xl passim.

[2] Chron. v. 13, 14.

The rationalist critics who systematically exclude every miraculous element from the life of Jesus, deny the fact of the Transfiguration, which is supernatural from beginning to end. They have analyzed it to its smallest details to demonstrate its impossibility and improbability. Such sceptics cannot accept the view that the body of Jesus was transformed into a luminous body, and that his raiment became more dazzling than snow; but experience shows that genius and goodness can impart to the human face a sort of spiritual glow. Their susceptibilities are hurt by the presence of two dead men, Elias and Moses, as though the dead no longer existed; as though the connection between heaven and earth, between the kingdom of the dead and that of the living, was nothing but a dream. They ask how the Apostles could have recognised the two men who spoke to Jesus, and who are not mentioned by the Evangelists by name; as if their speech or the traditional and well-known conception which the Jews had formed of them were not enough to identify them. They have refused to understand the moral purpose of this divine scene, although that is yet another guarantee of its truthfulness. They have tried to explain it; but their attempts are more feeble than their objections.[1]

The mythical school has seen in the event an invention of the disciples, for the purpose of glorifying their Master and of raising him above Moses and the Prophets. There is no evidence to support this fancy. The hypothesis of a legend does not at all explain the very precise historical details which in the three Gospels surround this event; it does not explain why Jesus sternly forbade his apostles to publish an event, which on this supposition never occurred; it is besides in opposition to the testimony of Peter, one of the witnesses, who wrote some years later: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount."[1]

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[1] Cf. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, II. Band; Weiss, *Evang. Geschichte*, I. Band.

The mythical explanation will never prevail against such explicit testimony, which excludes at the same time the theory which has endeavoured to convert the actual scene into a mere subjective vision.

Besides, it is difficult to believe that Jesus would have attached such importance to a dream of his disciples, or that he would have forbidden them to recount it until after his resurrection from the dead.[2]

An impartial mind, untrammelled by the narrowness of a system, will have no difficulty in choosing between the letter of the Gospel narratives and the so-called critical explanations. The narratives, indeed, dominate us by their divine grandeur ; but in this very grandeur consists their only difficulty, and this is explained by the power of God. The rationalist hypotheses are, it is true, more within our grasp, but they contradict the assertion of the witnesses, and they have nothing definite to rely upon to vindicate the arbitrary nature of their denial. The Gospels assert the positive manifestations of God in opposition to the fanciful inventions of man.

The Transfiguration was no mere accident in the life of Jesus, it was a direct result of the laws of its development. One of the most invariable of these is, that his humility as a man always made his hidden Godhead to burst forth, and the more he abased himself by voluntarily accepting sacrifice, sorrow, and death, the more did his divinity shine brightly in him and exalt him.

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[1] II. Peter i. 16. Criticism, it is true, has endeavoured to dispute the authenticity of the Epistle, but it has not brought against it any decisive argument. The whole contents of the letter are a confirmation of the traditional opinion, and as early as the first century the work is quoted by St. Clement (*Ep. ad Corinth.*, ii.), by St. Polycarp (*ad Phil.*, n. 1, 2, 5, etc.), and Papias (Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, iii. 39).

[2] Matt. xvii 9; Mark ix 8, 9; Luke ix 36.

When he asked John to baptize him, like a sinner, the heavens opened above his head ; at the moment when he resolved to fulfil all the Law, he heard himself called the well-beloved Son of the Father. At the height of his triumph in Galilee, he renounced all temporal glory and repudiated the intervention of the people, who were ready to proclaim him king ; on the same night he walked on the waters, calmed the tempest, and showed himself lord over nature.

Here he had just declared to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, to suffer and to die ; six days after he appears in the glory of his Kingdom, greater than Moses and Elias, universal and sole master, resplendent with light and immortality, transfigured in the radiance of his Father. Some months later, overwhelmed by the thought of his sufferings, he cried to his Father, " Save me. . . but for suffering am I come. Father, glorify thy name." A voice mighty as thunder, answered him : " I will glorify it."

When his hour is come, he will submit to insult and death ; he will descend into the tomb ; the living Spirit will raise him from death and the tomb to the glory of the Father.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST CONVERSATIONS AT CAPERNAUM.

A VISION, if only for a moment, of the truth, the beauty, the holiness, and the glory, which will be ours when the victory is won, is the great means of strengthening the failing courage and the feeble will, and of calming the troubles of the mind in presence of obstacles and dangers. At this sight hope lifts her head, faith grows bold, and the soul, exalted above itself, becomes capable of every effort. In this way, Jesus set in the hearts of his favoured three disciples a leaven which should spread its energy among all the rest, instilling into them a courage and faith against which oppression, despondency, and tribulation were to have no power.

Jesus, on the following day, descended Mount Tabor with them, and, as he walked, he said unto them :

"Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."[1]

The gifts of God exalt and expand the soul, but it is not good always to publish them. Their very grandeur often only attracts incredulity, and exposure becomes profanation. If treasured in the hearts of those who have witnessed them, they give strength and light ; if prematurely divulged, their virtue evaporates and is lost.

The three apostles, at the Master's command, kept this secret to themselves, seeking in vain to understand what he meant by the words "until he be risen from the dead."

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[1] Matt. xvii. 9, etc. ; Mark ix. 8, etc.

They asked themselves to what resurrection he alluded, and whether he spoke in a figure: was his body, indeed, to rise from the dead, or did he refer to the re-establishment of the Kingdom of Israel after his death? The latter hypothesis alone engaged their thoughts. "Why," they asked, "do the Pharisees and Scribes say that Elias must come before the restitution of the Kingdom of Israel?"

Jesus replied: "Truly, Elias cometh first, before the advent of the Son of man, to restore all things and to prepare his way; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things and be set at nought. But I say unto you, that Elias has already come, and they knew him not; and as it is written of him, they have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them."

The apostles understood that he spoke of John the Baptist. Suffering is the destined burden of all the messengers of God; John the Baptist had already submitted to it, and now Jesus was about to take it upon his shoulders.

On rejoining the disciples at the foot of the mountain,[1] he saw them surrounded by a numerous crowd, and the Scribes questioning with them; his unexpected arrival caused great amazement: about his face there was still a reflection of the celestial light. They ran to him and saluted him:

"What question ye among yourselves?" he asked.

"Master," answered one of the multitude, falling at his feet, "I have brought my son to you: have pity on him, he is a lunatic, and suffers much: he is possessed of a dumb spirit. Whenever the spirit takes possession of him, it throws him on the ground, he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away. I spake to thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not."

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[1] Matt. xvii. 14, etc.; Mark ix. 17, etc.; Luke ix. 37, etc.

This lack of power in the disciples must have provoked the raillery and the reproach of the Pharisees among the crowd. Jesus was greatly struck with the general incredulity. All were wanting in faith: the father of the lunatic, the Scribes, the people, and even the disciples.

He gave a cry of indignation:

"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?"

But, at the sight of any sorrow to be healed or comforted, his compassion got the better of every other feeling.

"Bring him unto me," he said.

As soon as the child saw Jesus, the spirit, tormenting him, threw him violently to the ground, and he wallowed, foaming.

And he asked his father, "How long is it since this came unto him?"

"Since his infancy. Often the spirit throws him into the fire and into the water to kill him. If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

The father's words, "if thou canst," betrayed his little faith.

"If thou canst believe," said Jesus, "all things are possible to him that believeth."

And straightway the father cried out, with tears:

"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

The people came running together about Jesus, and he rebuked the foul spirit:

"Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of this child, and enter no more into him."

The spirit uttered a great cry, and rent him sore and came out of him. The child fell down as though dead.

"He is dead," they said.

But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose; he was healed.

The vivid and detailed description which the second Gospel gives us of the sick child, suggests epilepsy. It would be wrong to conclude that this physical infirmity excluded demoniac possession, and that in this case, as in the rest, only ignorance and superstition saw in it the action of the evil spirit. Jesus paid no attention to the bodily malady. The violent disorders visible in the case of the poor epileptic, were, in his eyes, merely the manifestation of a Satanic power, to which he was in bondage. It was this mysterious agent that he addressed, and, by casting it out, he healed the child.

The whole secret of his influence over mankind, enthralled by the powers of evil, is made manifest in this act. By it, mankind, enfranchised, listens to the voice of God, learns to praise him, and recovers, with its liberty, the peace which nothing can again disturb.

Immediately after, Jesus left the people marvelling at the power of God, and the Scribes in their discomfiture, and took refuge in a house with his disciples.

Having proved their own powerlessness, this cure appeared so much the more miraculous to the disciples. They went to their Master, and said to him secretly: "Why could not we cast out this devil?"

"Because of your unbelief," Jesus replied: "for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed," a small seed of great vitality, "ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove. Nothing shall be impossible unto you."

By the teaching of Jesus, it is faith, indeed, which makes us participate in the very life and power of God. It is no longer the man that works in the believer, it is God himself.

Then he added, "This kind of devil," sensual and obstinate, "goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

These two words express what faith should be: by fasting, faith tears from us all material and physical strength; by prayer, it unites us to the Being, the light, the goodness, the power of God. The human being is completely subverted, he no longer has root in the terrestrial world, to which he dies; he has his spring of life in the divine world, of which he becomes the irresistible instrument.

When we trace through centuries the influence of Jesus on the hearts of men, we see that they are saved only by this double force, which he revealed to his disciples. If the God-fearing man does not, by rigorous abstinence, sacrifice all that is human, terrestrial, and created; if he does not open his inmost heart by prayer to the love of God, the source of all heavenly strength, he is powerless to raise the souls of others above earthly things, and to win them to the spiritual life. The invisible Christ must intervene, his strength must supplement the weakness of his messenger.

This conversation occurred in the neighbourhood of Mount Tabor. Jesus and his disciples proceeded in the direction of Capernaum, passing through Galilee. As he did not wish to excite the attention of the people, the journey was made in secret. On his way he taught the disciples.

The thought of his approaching death never left him, and he reminded them of it. As they walked along, he said to them suddenly: "Keep these things in your heart: the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day after his death he shall rise again."

But they did not understand this mystery, which remained a secret to them; and not only did they not understand it, but they feared even to question the Master on the subject.[1]

Man shrinks from the truth if it is antagonistic and humiliating to his reason. Nothing appeared so incongruous to the Jews as the idea of a suffering and sacrificed Messiah.

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[1] Luke ix. 45.

The apostles were worthy of their race; even after having confessed with true faith the divine sonship of their Master, they obstinately refused to believe in his humiliation and in his momentary defeat; while Jesus is trying to lead their thoughts back to this idea, in order to familiarize them gradually with the sad and terrible aspect of his fate, they are only thinking of the glory of his reign and discussing with one another, unknown to their Master, their own precedence in the Messianic Kingdom.

The little company of travellers reached Capernaum; and their return was marked by the following incident.[1]

It was just the time when those who received the tribute money were collecting the tax; they came to Peter and asked him: "Doth not your Master pay the didrachma?"[2] "My Master doth," replied Peter.

But when he was come into the house to inform Jesus, Jesus forestalled him.

"What thinkest thou, Simon?" he said to him, "of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?" "Of strangers," said Peter.

Then Jesus answered, "The children are free; notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money (a *stater*); that take, and give unto them for me and thee."

This incident, which the first Evangelist alone has recorded in his narrative, contains an allusion to the divine sonship of Jesus. Though he rejected all temporal royalty he implied that he was the son of the eternal King; and, in virtue of this right, he declares himself and all those who participate in his Kingdom to be free. But the Son of God, who took upon him the form of a servant to save men, in dealing with men, knew also how to renounce his rights. Charity is higher than justice; to claim one's rights is an act of justice, to renounce them an act of charity. Jesus followed the dictates of charity, and gives an example of renunciation to man, who is always so hard and so grasping when his rights or his interests are touched: he will pay the tribute, but only by making his divine power manifest, and by sending Peter to find the two didrachmas in the mouth of the fish.

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[1] Matt. xvii. 23, etc.

[2] Some authors suppose that the tribute demanded of Jesus was the tax for the maintenance of the Temple. This interpretation may be admitted; it in no way alters the signification of the event. Cf. Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmud*, ad h. l.

The tax for the Temple, like the Roman tribute, was two drachmas a head. The former was collected in the month Adar (February), a little before the beginning of the ecclesiastical year; the latter at the feast of Tabernacles, in the month Tisri (September-October), before the beginning of the civil year.

At the same time, the disciples entered the house of Cephas, and, when they were all together again, Jesus asked them: "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?"

They were silent for a moment, not daring to reply. At length they acknowledged that they had discussed who should be the first in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The petty passions which agitated the hearts even of those who were so close to their Master are betrayed by this significant incident. Peter had been chosen their head, and James and John seemed to enjoy a certain preference. These marked distinctions did not fail to arouse a certain envy and jealousy among the others. God is master of his gifts; but selfish, vain, self-seeking man, instead of using them for the good of all, is ready to use them for his own advantage, and, though close to the side of Jesus, he grows restless and self-conscious, extols his own merits, refuses to recognize those of others, and aspires to the first place. Hence arise bitter disputes, rivalries, insults, and the wounds of injured self-love. Jesus was not ignorant of these less worthy feelings which disturbed the peace and union of his disciples, and he devoted the last day, perhaps the last hours, at Capernaum to healing them.

He wished to speak with them privately,[1] and no doubt he retired into the upper chamber. Having sat down he called the twelve to him and said:

"If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and the servant of all."

Then he took a little child and set him in the midst of them.

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall become as this child the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

To be the last, the servant of all, to be humble, to recognize the vanity of one's own reason, knowledge, strength, will, virtue, genius, activity, ambitions, interests, pleasures, and glory—in a word, to confess one's own nothingness; that is the condition to enter and to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven. God only hears the humble and the needy, the hungry ones who cry to him with a true feeling of their wretchedness. This was the special teaching of Jesus, and he reminds the Twelve of it by showing them a child, as the symbol of weakness, sincerity, and lowliness.

The innocence and docility of the child moved his compassion, for his sympathy was always aroused by helplessness and purity. He took him in his arms and said:

"Whosoever shall receive one of such children, in my name, receiveth me, and whosoever shall receive me receiveth not me alone, but him that sent me."

Jesus, in his lovingkindness, identifies himself with all that is poor, helpless, and unfortunate.

To assist the weak and to receive them for his sake, as he himself said, is to help and to receive him; it is to receive God himself.

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[1] Matt. xviii. 1, etc.; Mark ix. 34, etc.; Luke ix. 46.

This exhortation appears to have troubled the mind of one of the Twelve.

"Master," said John, "we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us."

But Jesus replied, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against you is for you."

To do good in the name of Jesus is to have spiritual communion with him, and then, even if we are not outwardly associated with the community of his disciples, we are, though standing apart, useful helpers in his work.

"For whosoever shall give you a cup of water only in my name, verily I say unto you he shall not lose his reward."

No act of kindness is forgotten in the Kingdom; but woe unto them that shall do evil to those who are tender and weak!

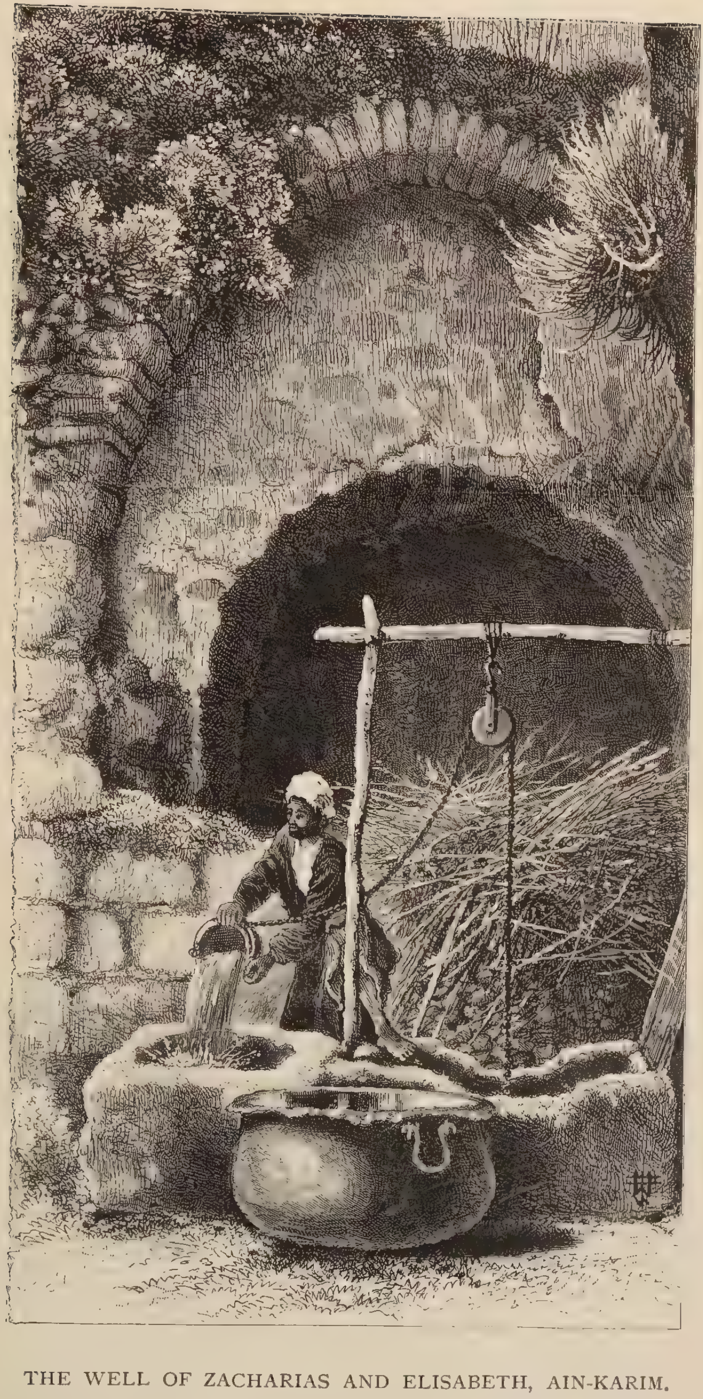
"Whosoever shall offend one of these littles ones that believe in me," he added in a warning tone, "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the depth of the sea."

"Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Jesus teaches us to resolutely shun, and to sever from us, everything that leads to evil.

"If thy hand offend thee," he said in words of severity, "cut it off and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands to be cast into the eternal fire. If thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, rather than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better



THE WELL OF ZACHARIAS AND ELISABETH, AIN-KARIM.

for thee to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the Gehenna of fire, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

"As every sacrifice is salted with salt to render it incorruptible, so they will be salted with fire and preserved by it."

These words of Jesus make us feel the anger of his goodness. Justice is not so terrible as the mild reproach of love. It is a Satanic work, to lead into evil the weak, the defenceless little ones. The world, over which Satan has dominion, abounds with such offences, such oppressions, and such tyranny. The child which Jesus took as a living symbol, represents the whole of mankind with its ignorances and prejudices, which are the weakness of reason; with its instincts, which are the weakness of will; with its destitution, which is the weakness of life. To take advantage of this helplessness, to despise it, above all to turn it aside from God, who is its true, its only remedy, this is the supreme offence. Jesus had the offence, which so roused his indignation, before his very eyes. The people of Galilee had fallen a victim to the influential classes, the doctors and the scribes who by exerting in turn authority, false teaching, threat, and cunning, did all in their power to turn them from him. This sight made his holy anger burst forth against them. "Take heed," he added, "that ye despise not one of these little ones!" They possess a heavenly power which protects them against their oppressors. "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

Never had the righteous innocence, the birthright of the weak, been more vividly, more tenderly exalted.

Jesus was never weary of this subject; it brought out his compassion and tenderness, his love and pity, in their fulness.

"The Son of man," he continued, "is come to save that which was lost." He regarded the whole of mankind as a weak and erring being whom he had come to strengthen and reclaim.

"How think ye?" he said to his disciples; "if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray."

It was thus, then, that the mind of Jesus interpreted the never-failing mercy of God. The Father is the good shepherd, who does not wish one of his flock to perish; and he has sent his Son on the earth to gather them all to his fold.

The true sign of goodness is forgiveness, and Jesus showed its beauty to his apostles.

"If one of thy brothers have trespassed against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he will not hear you, tell the assembly of brothers, tell it unto the church; and if he will not hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.

"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

It is the duty of charity to seek out unweariedly the erring brother, even until it encounters declared and immovable obstinacy. The man who becomes inflexible in hatred and insult no longer belongs to the Church, for he no longer has the Spirit of God in him.

"Again I say unto you," said Jesus, "that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

These simple words give briefly the very essence of the work of Jesus. He is the bond of union of those who are joined together in his name, and he is in the midst of them; his living Spirit cries aloud in them, and invokes the Father, through whose mercy it obtains all things. Jesus was working towards this coming together of his followers, this universal assembly, and the disciples, who surrounded him, and who received in full measure of his wisdom, power, and love, already realised the unity of his Church, which still exists at this present day with unlimited power to forgive sins.

The Spirit which inspires the Church is mercy and pity, and by obedience to this Spirit she will continue the work of her Master in mankind, which, constantly sinning, has constant need of pardon.

A question asked by Peter elicited this declaration from Jesus concerning the duty and the power of the Church.

"Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me," he asked, "and I forgive him? till seven times?"

The infinite pity of the Master offers a striking contrast to the niggardly pity of man:

"I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

This contains the whole spirit of the Kingdom. Jesus declares it by an impressive parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. At first one was brought unto him which owed six thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and payment to be made. The servant fell on his knees and besought his master, saying, Have patience with me, I beseech thee, and I will pay thee all. The lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt; but as he went out from his Lord's house, he met one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence. He laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. The debtor fell on his knees and said, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called the first servant, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all thy debt, because thou desiredst me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him up until he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

The Kingdom of Jesus is the kingdom of love, and of pardon, which is an indispensable form of love. Whoever has been incorporated in it, is pardoned of God, and henceforth his duty is to pardon his fellows. The pity of God is infinite; ours should be boundless like his. Woe to the man who shuts out all feeling of pity, for he who is inexorable will encounter the inexorable justice of God.

No virtue demands more heroism. Man seems by nature implacable from his birth; if he cannot avenge himself, he keeps deep down in his heart the bitter feeling of resentment, and, by not forgiving, he nourishes the desire for vengeance. Jesus exacts this heroism, and, by requiring it of man, he reminds him that he must be like God.

We see with what trusting confidence the disciples questioned him; with what gentleness he taught, corrected, and exalted them.

Never before had man heard such lessons, or been incited to such virtues. It was thus in the midst of a world given up to all forms of pride, divisions, hatreds, oppression, and violence, that Jesus impressed on the souls of his disciples the first features of a new Kingdom, based on humility and gentleness, pity and forgiveness, respect and reverence for all the weak and the oppressed. Such a design requires some other spirit than the corrupted spirit of man, and explains the mysterious words which conclude the discourse :

"Salt is good," it preserves, it prevents decay. Have in you the Spirit, which is the salt of the soul : "Do not let it lose its savour." It will give you peace. "Have peace one with another."[1] This was the last discourse of Jesus at Capernaum, spoken on the eve of his quitting Galilee, and setting out for Jerusalem

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[1] Mark ix. 49.

END OF VOL. I.

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